THE WORLD'S WEIRDEST NEWS STORIES

PARANORMAL SCOTLAND • GLASGOW STONE CIRCLE • VOODOO MARKET • FLYING WIZARD • CAT-FACED WOMAN

THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA

ForteanTimes

WWW.FORTEANTIMES.COM

FT319 OCTOBER 2014 £4.25

HOLY MONSTERS

CHINA'S CHRISTIAN KILLER CULT

HAUNTED MURDER HOUSES

THE BLOODY HISTORIES AND GHOSTLY INHABITANTS OF LONDON'S SPOOKIEST ADDRESSES

10
9 770308 589224

Write Your Way To A New Career!

Writers Bureau Celebrates Twenty-five Years of Helping New Writers

by Nick Daws

Hazel McHaffie

Tim Skelton

When distance-learning pioneer Ernest Metcalfe founded The Writers Bureau in the late 1980s, he can hardly have dared hope that twenty-five years on it would be acknowledged as Britain's leading writing school. Yet so it proved, with thousands of Writers Bureau students seeing their work in print for the first time. And, for many of those who persevered with their writing, the dream of becoming a successful writer has turned into reality.

> *"My writing career took off exponentially."*

Students such as Tim Skelton. An engineer by profession, he had always harboured an ambition to write, and at the age of 40 signed up with The Writers Bureau. The decision changed his life: "My writing career took off exponentially. I started appearing regularly in lifestyle and in-flight magazines. The following year I was commissioned by Bradt Travel Guides to write a guidebook to Luxembourg. I've appeared in The Times and The Independent, and updated guidebooks for Fodor's, Thomas Cook, and the AA."

Another student who benefited was Hazel McHaffie. Hazel wanted to make her academic work in Medical Ethics more accessible to people, and decided to write the themes into novels. Following her Writers Bureau course, Hazel has had five novels published, and appeared at the Edinburgh International Book Festival. She also has her own website at www.hazelmchaffie.com.

Sometimes studying with The Writers Bureau takes students down new and unexpected paths. Patricia Holness originally enrolled on The Writers Bureau's Writing for Children course. However, she soon realised that what she was learning applied to other types of writing as well.

She is now a full-time writer, regularly selling short stories for both children and adults. She also has a monthly column in Devon Life.

These are just a selection from the inspirational true stories from students of The Writers Bureau. There's no reason why YOU couldn't be their next success story. With a 15-day free trial and money-back guarantee, there is nothing to lose and potentially a whole new career to gain! So why not visit their website at www.writersbureau.com or call on Freephone 0800 856 2008 for more information?

How To Become A Successful Writer!

As a freelance writer, you can earn very good money in your spare time, writing the stories, articles, books, scripts etc that editors and publishers want. Millions of pounds are paid annually in fees and royalties. Earning your share can be fun, profitable and creatively most fulfilling.

To help you become a successful writer we offer you a first-class, home-study course from professional writers – with individual guidance from expert tutors and flexible tuition tailored to your own requirements. You are shown how to make the most of your abilities, where to find ideas, how to turn them into publishable writing and how to sell them. In short, we show you exactly how to become a published writer. **If you want writing success – this is the way to start!**

Whatever your writing ambitions, we can help you to achieve them. For we give you an effective, stimulating and most enjoyable creative writing course… appreciated by students and acclaimed by experts.

It's ideal for beginners. No previous experience or special background is required. You write and study at your own pace – you do not have to rush – as you have four years to complete your course. **Many others have been successful this way.** If they can do it – why can't you?

We are so confident that we can help you become a published writer that we give you a **full refund guarantee.** If you have not earned your course fees from published writing by the time you finish the course, we will refund them in full.

If you want to be a writer start by requesting a free copy of our prospectus 'Write and be Published'. Please call our freephone number or visit our website NOW!

COURSE FEATURES

- 27 FACT-PACKED MODULES
- 2 SPECIALIST SUPPLEMENTS
- 20 WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS
- ADVISORY SERVICE
- TUTORIAL SUPPORT
- FLEXIBLE STUDY PROGRAMME
- STUDENT COMMUNITY AREA
- HOW TO PRESENT YOUR WORK
- HOW TO SELL YOUR WRITING
- 15 DAY TRIAL PERIOD
- FULL REFUND GUARANTEE

www.writersbureau.com

☎ **FREEPHONE** **Quote:**
24 HOURS **AT18914**

0800 856 2008

www.facebook.com/writersbureau
www.twitter.com/writersbureau

email: 14W1@writersbureau.com
Please include your name and address

Hannah Evans, Winchester
"I've been published in The Guardian and Good Life earning £400. And now I've got my first book published by Bloomsbury called MOB Rule: Lessons Learned by a Mother of Boys. The Writers Bureau course provided me with structure, stopped my procrastination but most importantly it provided the impetus to try something different."

Michael Foley, Essex
"Completing The Writers Bureau course has made it possible for me to attain my life-long ambition of becoming a published writer. The level of success I have achieved has far outweighed what I was hoping for when beginning the course. I have now had seventeen books published with two more under publication at the moment."

Jane Isaac, Northamptonshire
When I started the Writers Bureau course, I wanted to explore avenues for my writing and develop and strengthen my personal style. I had no idea that it would lead to me being a published writer of novels and short stories. I still pinch myself when I receive emails and messages from readers who've enjoyed my work or when I give talks to book clubs and visit bookstores to do signings. These are magical moments that have changed my life – my dream has come true."

Please send me free details on how to become a successful, freelance writer:

NAME ....

ADDRESS ....

....

.... POST CODE ....

EMAIL ....

Freepost RSSK-JZAC-JCJG
The Writers Bureau
Dept AT18914
Manchester, M3 1LE

Writers Bureau 25 Years of Success

Members of The British Institute for Learning and Development and ABCC

ForteanTimes
HAUNTED
MURDER HOUSES

ForteanTimes

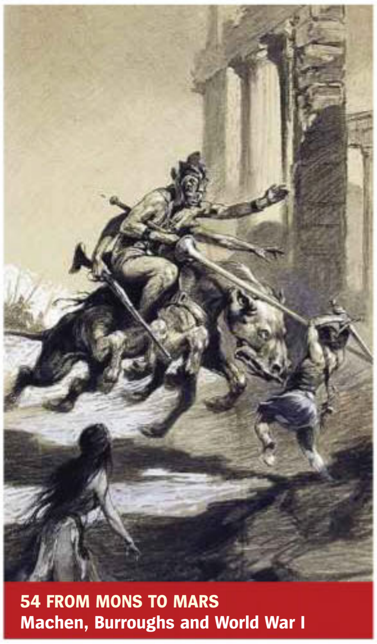
Available on the iPhone App Store

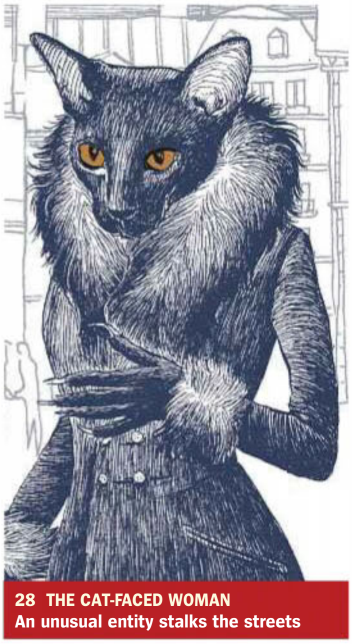
CONTENTS

the world of strange phenomena

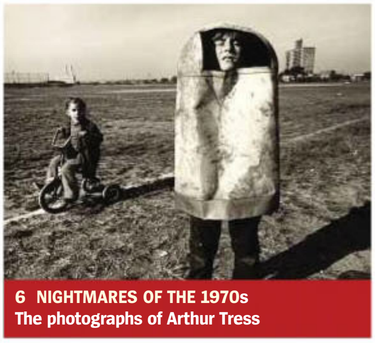
CHRIS LESLIE

42 STONES IN THE CITY
The rise and fall of Glasgow's modern stone circle


54 FROM MONS TO MARS
Machen, Burroughs and World War I


CAPUCINE DESLOUIS

28 THE CAT-FACED WOMAN
An unusual entity stalks the streets


ARTHUR TRESS / J PAUL GETTY MUSEUM, LA

6 NIGHTMARES OF THE 1970s
The photographs of Arthur Tress

76 VOODOO MARKET
Shopping for fetishes in Togo

COVER: ARCHIVE IMAGE/ETIENNE GILFILLAN

Fortean Times 319

strange days

China's killer Christian cult, flying wizard crash lands, plagues ancient and modern, Tsunami girl returns, strange tastes and weird phobias, monkey gland cocktails, Holy Grail news, Europe's dirtiest man – and much more.

14 SCIENCE
16 ARCHÆOLOGY
17 CLASSICAL CORNER
19 ALIEN ZOO
21 KONSPIRACY KORNER
23 MYTHCONCEPTIONS
25 FAIRIES & FOLKLORE
26 THE UFO FILES

features

COVER STORY

30 LONDON'S HAUNTED MURDER HOUSES, PART TWO

London is full of properties that once witnessed bloody murders and subsequent hauntings. Some have vanished, some still stand, but their violent histories are largely forgotten. In the second part of his investigation, **JAN BONDESON** goes in search of some of the bloodiest addresses of the great metropolis.

40 THE NEW 'SPIRIT' OF SCOTLAND

BRIAN J ROBB talks to movie producer Peter Broughan about the inaugural Scottish Paranormal Festival, set to spook Stirling this Hallowe'en.

42 STONES IN THE CITY

Why is there a megalithic circle in the middle of a half-demolished Glasgow housing estate? Who created it, and why? **JOHN REPPION** talks to Duncan Lunan about the rise and fall of one of modern Scotland's strangest public building projects: the Sighthill Stone Circle.

reports

28 BLASTS FROM THE PAST
No 53. The Cat-faced Woman of East Florence

48 DICTIONARY OF THE DAMNED
No 57. Abduction by aliens, part two

76 FORTEAN TRAVELLER
No 96. Lomé's Voodoo Market, Togo

forum

53 The Hunting of the Woggle by Rob Gandy
54 Bowmen of Mons and Mars by David Clarke
56 Preserving parapsychology by Christopher Laursen

regulars

02 EDITORIAL
59 REVIEWS
71 LETTERS
75 IT HAPPENED TO ME
79 PHENOMENOMIX
80 STRANGE DEATHS

EDITOR
DAVID SUTTON
(drsutton@forteantimes.com)
FOUNDING EDITORS
BOB RICKARD (bobrickard@mail.com)
PAUL SIEVEKING (sieveking@forteantimes.com)
ART DIRECTOR
ETIENNE GILFILLAN
(etienne@forteantimes.com)
BOOK REVIEWS EDITOR
VAL STEVENSON
(val@forteantimes.com)
RESIDENT CARTOONIST
HUNT EMERSON
SUBSCRIPTION ENQUIRIES AND BACK ISSUES
www.subsinfo.co.uk
ForteanTimes@servicehelpline.co.uk

FORTEAN TIMES is produced for Dennis Publishing
by Wild Talents Ltd. Postal address: Fortean Times,
PO BOX 71602, London E17 0QD.

You can manage your existing subscription through
http://www.subsinfo.co.uk/ – this should be your first port
of call if you have any queries about your subscription.

Change your address, renew your subscription
or report problems
UK subscriptions: 0844 844 0049
USA & Canada subscriptions: (+1) 888-428-6676
Fax (+1) 757-428-6253 email cs@imsnews.com
Other overseas subscriptions: +44 (0)1795 592 909
Fax: +44 (0)1795 414 555

LICENSING & SYNDICATION
FORTEAN TIMES IS AVAILABLE FOR
INTERNATIONAL LICENSING AND SYNDICATION – CONTACT:
Syndication Senior Manager
ANJ DOSAJ-HALAI TEL: +44- (0) 20 7907 6132
Anj_Dosaj-Halai@dennis.co.uk
Licensing Manager
CARLOTTA SERANTONI TEL: +44- (0) 20 7907 6550
Carlotta_Serantoni@dennis.co.uk
Licensing & Syndication Assistant
NICOLE ADAMS TEL: +44- (0) 20 7907 6134
Nicole_Adams@dennis.co.uk
YOU CAN REACH FT ON THE INTERNET
www.forteantimes.com

© Copyright Dennis Publishing Limited

PUBLISHED BY
DENNIS PUBLISHING,
30 Cleveland Street
London W1T 4JD, UK
Tel: 020 7907 6000

GROUP PUBLISHER
PAUL RAYNER
020 7907 6663
paul_rayner@dennis.co.uk

CIRCULATION MANAGER
JAMES MANGAN
james.mangan@
seymour.co.uk

EXPORT CIRCULATION
MANAGER
GERALDINE GROBLER
geraldine.grobler@
seymour.co.uk

PRODUCTION EXECUTIVE
SOPHIE VALENTINE
020 7907 6057
sophie_valentine@dennis.
co.uk

ADVERTISING DIRECTOR
STEVE NICOLAOU
020 7907 6633
ryan_gw@dennis.co.uk

DEPUTY ADVERTISING
MANAGER
CIARAN SCARRY
020 7907 6683
ciaran_scarry@dennis.
co.uk

SALES EXECUTIVE
ISABELLA COX
020 7907 6717
isabella_cox@dennis.co.uk

PRINTED BY POLESTAR BICESTER

DISTRIBUTION
Distributed in UK, Ireland and worldwide
by Seymour Distribution Ltd.
2 East Poultry Avenue, London EC1A 9PT
Tel: 020 7429 4000 / Fax: 020 7429 4001
Queries on overseas availability should be emailed to
info@seymour.co.uk
Speciality store distribution by Worldwide Magazine
Distribution Ltd, Tel: 0121 788 3112 Fax: 0121 7881272

STANDARD SUBSCRIPTION RATES
12 issues: UK £39.98; EU £47.50

Fortean Times (USPS 023-226) is published every four weeks by Dennis
Publishing Ltd, 30 Cleveland Street, London, W1P 4JD, United Kingdom.
The US annual subscription price is $89.99.
Airfreight and mailing in the USA is by Agent named Air Business,
C/O Worldnet Shipping USA Inc., 149-35 177th Street, Jamaica,
New York, 11434.
Periodical postage paid at Jamaica, NY 11431, USA.
US Postmaster: Send address changes to: Fortean Times,
3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 500, Virginia Beach, VA, 23451-2983, USA.

REST OF THE WORLD £55; US $89.99 ($161.98 for 24 issues)

DENNIS PUBLISHING LIMITED
GROUP FINANCE DIRECTOR IAN LEGGETT
FINANCE DIRECTOR BRETT REYNOLDS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR KERIN O’CONNOR
CHIEF EXECUTIVE JAMES TYE
COMPANY FOUNDER FELIX DENNIS

Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.
Circulation 17,024 (Jan-Dec 2011)

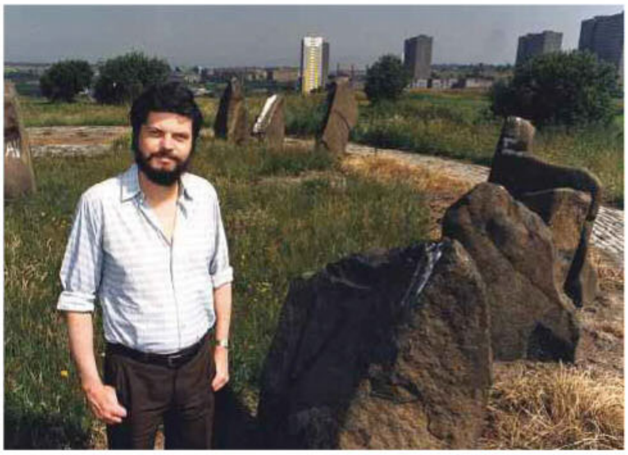
Printed in the UK. ISSN: 0308 5899
© Fortean Times: SEPTEMBER 2014

editorial

North of the border

This issue will be hitting the newsstands on Thursday 18 September; the on-sale date of a new issue of *FT* is always one for the diary, but we suspect that on this occasion it will be somewhat overshadowed by an event considerably more historic: the long-awaited and much-debated referendum on Scottish independence.

Whatever the outcome, we thought we’d mark the occasion by looking back at one of the odder and more obscure events of recent Scottish history – the strange tale of how the first astronomically aligned stone circle to be built in Britain for 3,000 years appeared in the middle of a Glasgow housing estate.


BRIAN FAIR

One of the key figures in the story was Duncan Lunan, who will be known to some forteans for his claimed discovery and deciphering of a message sent by an alien space probe, written up in the journal of the British Interplanetary Society in 1973, as well as his book on the Green Children of Woolpit. Back in 1978, though, Duncan became the head of the unlikely-sounding Glasgow Parks Astronomy Project, which had come into being when the success of the SNP’s (Scottish National Party) ‘It’s Scotland’s Oil’ campaign prompted the Labour government to put notional oil revenues back into the country through its Jobs Creation Scheme. It’s doubtful that Jim Callaghan – struggling with inflation and strikes – thought for one moment that any of the money was going to be used to create a modern megalithic structure in what later became Glasgow’s Sighthill Park. The idea came from a competition in which local schoolchildren submitted ideas for a parks project: a Stonehenge-like structure was the winning entry, and the project was off the ground. By the time the so-called Winter of Discontent came to an end, locals watched and wondered as Royal Navy helicopters were used to lower the stones into place and Glasgow’s very own stone circle was born.

John Reppion spoke to Duncan Lunan (pictured at the circle in 1989) at length about the project’s inception, construction and aims – one of which was to provide a practical demonstration of Neolithic astronomical science to silence the naysayers in the scientific mainstream – and you can read the whole fascinating saga (pp42-47) in this issue. The story is an ongoing one. Campaigns to save the Sighthill Circle appear to have won a partial victory; even as the remaining grim tower blocks of the Sighthill Estate are demolished around them, it seems the stones will be removed, stored and re-erected at another site. We can only hope that this little-known piece of Scottish history will find a suitable new home, whatever the fate of the nation. Perhaps, if the vote goes his way, Alex Salmond could celebrate independence by building a new stone circle in every Scottish town and city...

Meanwhile, in Stirling, filmmaker Peter Broughan plans to celebrate Scotland’s wider weird heritage by mounting the first ever Paranormal Scotland Festival this Hallowe’en. He spoke to FT’s Brian J Robb about his aim of making it a regular event in the weird year calendar and, indeed, “the Cannes of paranormal festivals” (see pp40-41). We wish him well, as we do all our readers north of the border, whatever the future holds for them.

TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES

We’d like to apologise to everyone who uses the FT website (www.forteantimes.com) to send us their news stories, photos and other stuff. Due to some ongoing technical problems, all of your emails have been disappearing into a black hole somewhere in cyberspace from which we can’t, as yet, retrieve them. We’re working on it, and hopefully by the time you read this things will be up and running again. In the meantime, you can always send us news links via Twitter (@forteantimes) or Facebook (www.facebook.com/ForteanTimes).

DAVID R SUTTON

BOB RICKARD

Paul Sieveking
PAUL SIEVEKING

Why fortean?

Everything you always wanted to know about *Fortean Times* but were too paranoid to ask!

SEE PAGE 78

"A CHILLING LAYER OF REAL, VERY HUMAN ANXIETY"
FANGORIA

"ENTRENCHED IN EXQUISITE PARANOIA"
CRAVE

"AUTHENTICALLY SCARY"
NEW YORK TIMES

"A STRIKINGLY SMART HORROR MOVIE"
DEN OF GEEK

15 STRONG VIOLENCE, GORY IMAGES, SEX, NUDITY, THREAT, STRONG LANGUAGE

ROSE LESLIE HARRY TREADAWAY

HONEYMOON

AFTER THE CEREMONY COMES THE RITUAL.

IN SELECTED ODEON CINEMAS
FANATICAL ABOUT FILM
NATIONWIDE FROM SEPTEMBER 26

MAGNET WWW.FINDANYFILM/HONEYMOON ARROW FILMS

A DIGEST OF THE WORLDWIDE WEIRD

strangedays

Striking back at Lightning

Members of killer cult that believes Jesus has returned as a middle-aged Chinese woman go on trial

山东省烟台市中级人民法院

ABOVE: CCTV footage of the attack, and the five cult members ready to stand trial. **BELOW:** Lightning Deng and Zhao Weishan.

On 21 August, five members of China's most radical cult – the quasi-Christian Church of Almighty God, aka Eastern Lightning – went on trial in Yantai, a seaside city in Shandong, for murdering "Ms Wu", 37, in a branch of McDonald's in Zhaoyuan (also in Shandong) while she waited for her husband and seven-year-old son on 28 May. No one intervened to stop the killing, which was filmed on CCTV and smartphone cameras, as Zhang Lidong, 54, an unemployed pharmaceutical salesman, his two daughters and two adult women tried to obtain Ms Wu's phone number for recruitment purposes and then bludgeoned her to death with chairs and a metal mop handle when she refused to give it to them. "She is a monster," Zhang later said on television, "She is an evil spirit. We are not afraid of the law. We have faith in God." The church has said the case against its five members is "full of lies and layered with dubious facts."

Eastern Lightning was founded in 1989 by Zhao Weishan, a physics teacher from Heilongjiang province. Adherents believe Jesus has returned to Earth as a middle-aged Chinese woman named Lightning Deng from Henan province, and hold that belonging to the group will save them from an impending apocalypse. After the police put Zhao and his lover Yang Xiangbin on a wanted list in the mid-1990s, the pair travelled to the US on false passports and claimed asylum. They mastermind an organisation with as many as a million members and which is on a ruthless recruitment drive, especially targeting housewives and Christian congregations.

> "Chosen ones should be ready to sacrifice their lives"

Eastern Lightning has a slick website, professionally produced videos, and even recently took a double-page advertisement in the London *Times*. Heads of the cult preach that the "chosen ones" should be ready to "sacrifice their lives" and that their ultimate goal is to kill the Communist Party, referred to as "the Great Red Dragon". If cultists murder Communist Party members, "the spirit of the Great Read Dragon will no longer possess them," the cult instructs followers.

Chinese authorities have listed Eastern Lightning as one of 14 "evil cults" and have made repeated attempts to eradicate it. In late 2012, they arrested more than 450 members after they held secret gatherings and spread leaflets asserting the world was going to end on 21 December that year. Since the MacDonald's attack last May, they have arrested more than 1,500 members. However, the group appears to be growing in provincial cities and rural areas, and is beginning to gain a foothold in Hong Kong, Taiwan and the US. Its website claims that it has millions of members. *Epoch Times, 1 June; Bloomberg News, 3 June; Guardian, 19 Aug; D.Telegraph, 21 Aug 2014.*

OUT OF THE BLUE
Golf ball-sized hailstones and a rain of out-of-place snails
PAGE 9

FAMILIES REUNITED
Girl swept away by tsunami makes it home after a decade
PAGE 18

A PLAGUE ON US ALL
Smallpox, Stone Age viruses and the plague pits of London
PAGE 22

Flying ‘wizard’ crash lands

Brothers rescue man with borrowed breasts en route to meeting

On 27 November 2013, Liberty Obeng and Innocent Obeng, two brothers walking along the banks of the Okrudu River at Kaimebre in Ghana, came upon a man crying for help. He gave his name as Charles Atta and claimed to be a wizard. He was thought to be in his 70s, looked frail, and bore protruding breasts like those of a teenage girl. His body was smeared with mud from the bank of the river. The Obeng brothers told local reporters that the man said he was from Akuapem Akropong and had been in the company of colleagues, including a medical doctor, who were flying to Cape Coast for a meeting of witches and wizards when he was forced down over a church where an all-night vigil was being held, crash-landing at Servant Kings International School.

Atta confessed that the two puffy protrusions on his chest were breasts taken from his 16-year-old granddaughter and that he normally borrowed them for his night activities. Bewildered, as well they might be, the two brothers took him to Pink FM, a local radio station at Kasoa, for help. When the strange story was broadcast, hundreds of people besieged the radio station to see the suspected wizard, and the Kasoa District Police dispatched a number of officers to the station to save Atta from being lynched. Superintendent Samuel Tabril Punobyin said they did not investigate “spiritual matters” and that Atta could therefore not be charged with anything, though he was in protective custody. He said the police would look for the man’s family and hand him over to them. *Daily Guide (Ghana), 28 Nov 2013.*

EXTRA! EXTRA! FT’S FAVOURITE HEADLINES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

‘Burglars have taken a little bit of my dad’

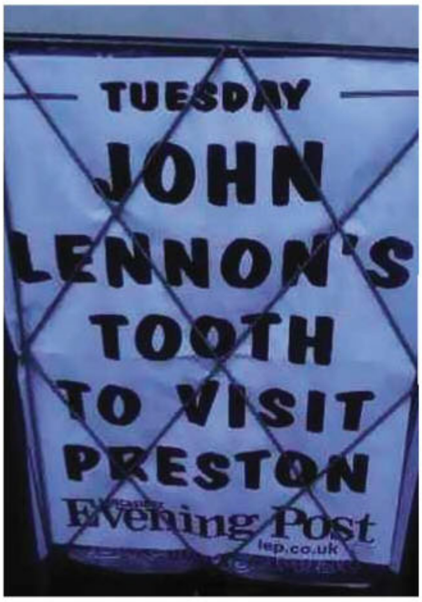
Hemel Hempstead Gazette, 26 Feb 2014.

Church needs £35k to end screeching

Salisbury (Wiltshire) Journal, 27 Feb 2014.

Mouse on revenge mission as Fenton horses await clearance

The Nationalist (Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, Ireland), 6 Mar 2014.



TUESDAY

JOHN LENNON’S TOOTH TO VISIT PRESTON

Evening Post
lep.co.uk

Lancashire Evening Post, date mislaid

TRUCKER KILLED BY DEAD BADGER

Sun, 22 Feb 2014.

Stone-crushing plant opposed by villagers

Hull Daily Mail, 21 Feb 2014.

Man receives €75,000 for disfigured left testicle

Irish Times, 6 Feb 2014.

NUN JAILED FOR NUCLEAR ATTACK

(Sydney) D.Telegraph, 20 Feb 2014.

PHOTOGRAPHING DAYMARES

In the late 1960s, American photographer Arthur Tress (born 1940) moved away from the naturalistic 'street' photography of the time and began exploring a dreamlike and disturbing world of childhood anxieties and terrors. Tress spoke with children about their dreams – nightmares that involved falling, monsters, being trapped or buried alive – and would then photograph them experiencing their fears in a safe, staged setting. These bizarre images were presented in the series 'Daymares' (1972), 'The Dream Collector' (1972) and 'Theater of the Mind' (1976). The J Paul Getty Museum recently acquired 66 of Tress's gelatin silver prints and plans to exhibit them in the future.

Clockwise from top left: *Boy with Magic Horns*, New York, 1970; *Girl in School Room*, New York, 1971; *Boy with Root Hands*, New York, 1971; *Boy in Goldfish Bowl*, Bronx, New York, 1970; *Girl and Dinosaur*, 1970.

Photos: © Arthur Tress / The J Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

SIDELINES...

ARMISTICE ON A PLATE

The car in which Archduke Ferdinand was shot on 28 June 1914, sparking World War I, is on show in the Museum of Military History in Vienna. The 1910 Gräf & Stift "Bois de Boulogne" touring car has the Austro-Hungarian licence plate A111-118, expressing the date of the armistice ending the war: 11/11/1918. *D.Telegraph, 28 June 2014.*

WIZARDRY OR LIZARDRY?

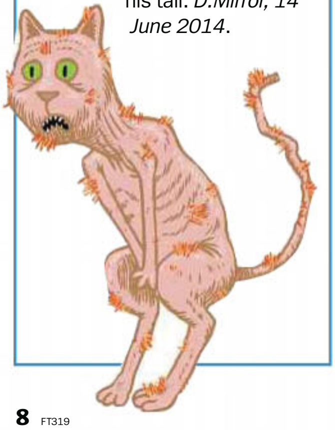
A woman was accused of witchcraft after allegedly giving birth to a gecko. Debi Nubatonis, 31, from Oenuntono in Indonesia, was threatened by a mob after midwife Josephine Wadu brought the reptile to the local health centre, claiming she had delivered it. Dr Messe Ataupa, chief medical officer in Kupang, speculated that Nubatonis had suffered a phantom pregnancy, and maybe vaginal discharge had landed on the gecko, leading Wadu to jump to conclusions. *Metro, 13 June; <i> 20 June 2014.*

BIG DAY FOR EVER

Xiang Junfeng, 58, from the eastern Chinese province of Shandong, has worn only wedding dresses since her wedding day in 2004, even when working with her husband in the fields, saying: "I don't care what people say". *Metro, Sun, 31 Mar 2014.*

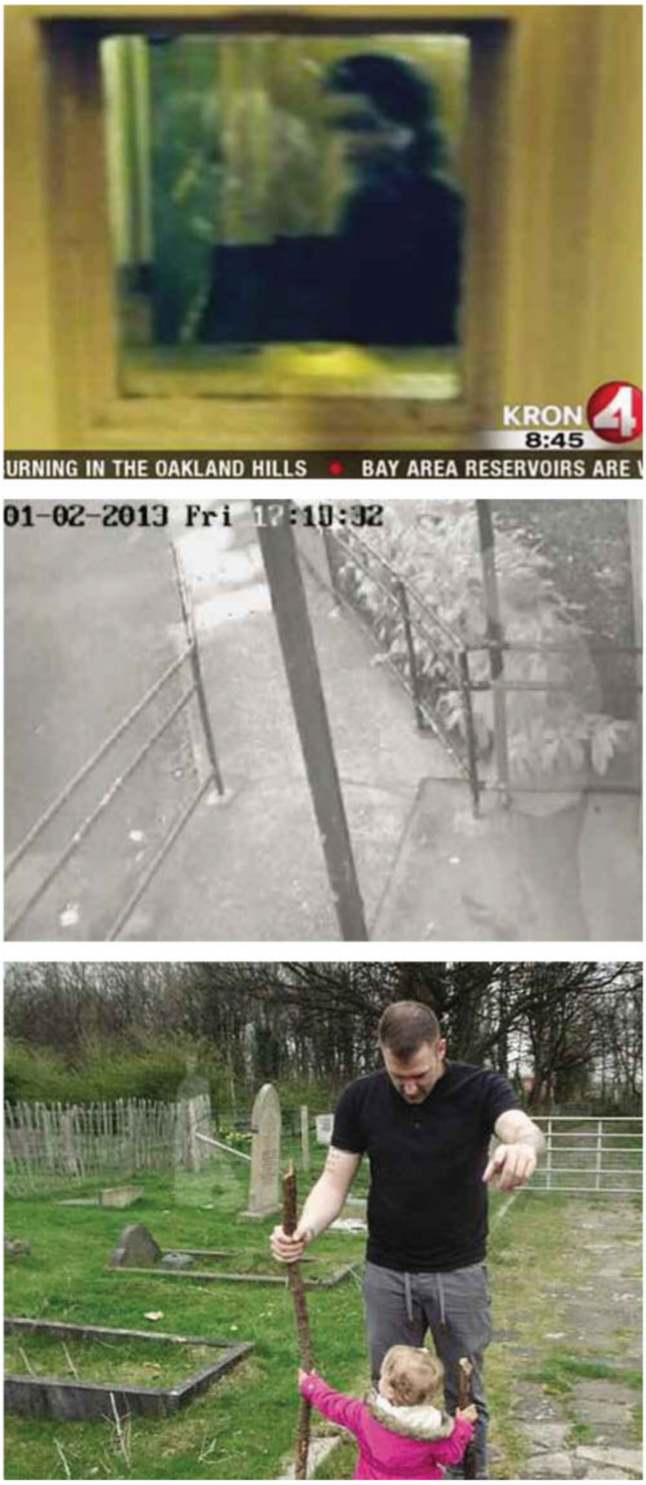
THE SOUTHPORT SHAVER

Someone has been snatching domestic cats round Southport, Merseyside, and shaving off their hair. He is said to have an accomplice and use an electric razor. Police were on his tail. *D.Mirror, 14 June 2014.*


MARTIN ROSS

Ghost photos

Some recent odd artefacts on film



TOP: Jailhouse shock in Alcatraz. **MIDDLE:** The ghost soldier legging it out of South Ruislip. **ABOVE:** The spectre of the Liverpool cemetery-turned-farm.

JAILHOUSE SHOCK

On 20 April 2014, Sheila Sillery-Walsh and her partner Paul Rice visited Alcatraz, the former maximum security Federal Penitentiary sited on an island off San Francisco with the reputation as one of the most haunted places in the US. The 48-year-old British teaching assistant took a photo of the inmates' visitation waiting room through an observation window. "When I glanced at the photo on my mobile," she said, "I saw this dark female figure in the picture. I looked at the window again and there was no one in the room." She showed the image to prison staff, but none of the old-timers recognised the woman in the picture, taken on her iPhone.

"I would love to know why she's shown herself in my photo," she said. "Weirdly, when we were near that cell, a woman came on the audio tour who used to visit a prisoner." School site manager Paul Rice, 50, from Birmingham, is convinced the figure in the photograph is a ghost and not a reflection of Ms Sillery-Walsh or any other flesh-and-blood person present on Alcatraz that day. "The woman's hair and clothing are from a different era," he said. "It looks like she's from the 1930s or 1940s." Alcatraz operated as a jail from 1934 to 1963. *Metro, 18 June 2014.*

GHOST SOLDIER

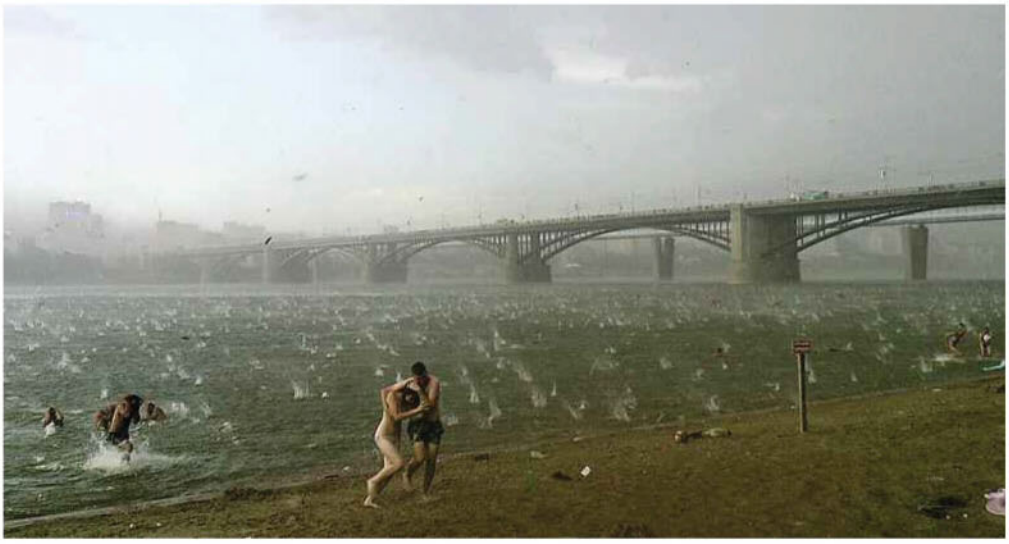
A spooked guard claims to have caught this apparent image of a ghost on CCTV. The transparent figure was seen leaving South Ruislip community centre, northwest London, in February. The site used to be a World War II prison camp, so it's been suggested the ghost is a soldier trying to escape. By the time of the report (*Metro, 20 Feb 2013*), the video had racked up 100,000 hits on YouTube.

CEMETERY SPECTRE

This photograph of Kirk Mount playing with one-year-old Robyn Lang in an old Liverpool cemetery, taken by Lisa Roach, seems to have captured the transparent image of a robed figure standing behind a gravestone. Opened in 1856, Liverpool (or Walton Park) Parochial Cemetery is one of the oldest in the city. It was located near the old workhouse/hospital on Rice Lane and many occupants of this institution were buried at the site. It is closed as a cemetery, but Rice Lane City Farm has occupied the site for 30 years. *Liverpool Echo, 1 July 2013.*

Falling from the skies

Siberian hailstone havoc, plus snails courtesy of Bertha



ABOVE: A hard rain falling in Novosibirsk in July. **BELOW:** A handful of snails which may have dropped in from the Canary Islands.

ANGLIA NEWSPAPERS

HEATWAVE HAILSTONES

Swimmers and sunbathers ran for cover as golfball-sized hailstones pelt the river Ob in the Russian city of Novosibirsk, western Siberia, on 12 July. Some were bruised and shaken. They had been basking in scorching 37°C (99°F) heat when, late on Saturday afternoon, heavy winds hit the sandy beach between two bridges and the bombardment began. “It was like being hit by raining bullets from the sky,” said one sunbather. “My husband was protecting our young daughter but his back was exposed to the hailstones and he has bruising all over it.” *[AP] D.Telegraph, 15 July 2014.*

SNAIL FALL

Val Blackmur and her friend Claire Mott were strolling along Icknield Way near Flitcham in west Norfolk on about 13 August. “We suddenly found we were crunching something underfoot,” she said. “We stooped down to see what it was. To start with we thought it was large grains of corn.” Closer inspection showed them to be snails less than a centimetre long. Hundreds were spread along a 20-yard stretch of road and the friends collected handfuls to take home. Mrs Blackmur’s book on snails indicated they were probably a variety of rissoid snails called parchment rissoa, normally found in eel grass habitats in shallow salt water from Norway and the Baltic down to the Canary Islands. Mrs Blackmur said: “On Monday [11 August] we were suffering the tail of Hurricane Bertha which came across the Atlantic, so I think [the snails] may have been lifted up off the shores of the Canaries by the high winds and brought to Flitcham. I put them in a cereal bowl and the next day some of them had come out of their shells and were all over the bowl and some had stuck to its sides. They must be nocturnal.” Eel grass is not that common in Norfolk, but can be found locally off Branchester and Wells, as well as at Breydon Water, near Yarmouth. *Norfolk Citizen, 20 Aug 2014.*

SIDELINES...

COLOMBIAN HIPPOS

The Colombian cocaine baron Pablo Escobar, one of the richest criminals in history, was shot by the police in 1993, leaving a zoo on his vast ranch. Most of the animals were moved elsewhere, but four hippos remained. They thrived and multiplied, and now about 60 roam the countryside, wandering onto neighbouring ranches, eating crops. No Colombian zoo wants to take the aggressive creatures and they cannot be returned to Africa (why not?). Some suggest a barbecue – hippos taste like pork, apparently. *Metro, 27 June 2014.*

A QUICK BREATHER

A French murderer who escaped from prison in Geneva, leaving a letter promising to turn himself in after four or five days once he had taken “some air”, kept his word. The 38-year-old is serving 15 years inside for the murder of a prostitute in 2005. *D.Telegraph, Sun, 7 June 2014.*

FREEZING REVELATION

A leech that can survive being submerged in liquid nitrogen could unlock the secrets of cryopreservation. *Ozobranchus jantseanus*, a parasite in freshwater turtles, can endure minus 90°C (-130°F) for nearly three years, say Japanese scientists who found a living leech attached to a frozen turtle. *MX News (Sydney), 29 Jan 2014.*

NOT SO SMART

Holly Hewett, 25, woken by a sizzling sound and the smell of burning, found her Samsung Galaxy S4 smartphone smouldering as it charged. She grabbed it, ran to the bathroom and threw it in the washbasin. “I didn’t burn myself but there’s a hole in the carpet where it was scorched,” she said. *D.Mail, 10 April 2014.*

LONG LOST NEEDLE

Ulf Bergström, 63, of Mala, Sweden, lost a 17mm needle in his arm while doing his own tattoo in 1974. Forty years later, in May 2014, it popped out of a blood-filled pimple on his big toe. *MX News (Sydney), 3 June 2014.*

SIDELINES...

COULD BE CONFUSING

Estate agent Paul Nicolls, 39, wed Lindsey Nicholls, 32, with Rev Bob Nicholls hearing the vows in front of registrar wife Jane Nicholls in Fair Oak, Hampshire. *Sun, 15 April 2014.*

RECIPE FOR DISASTER

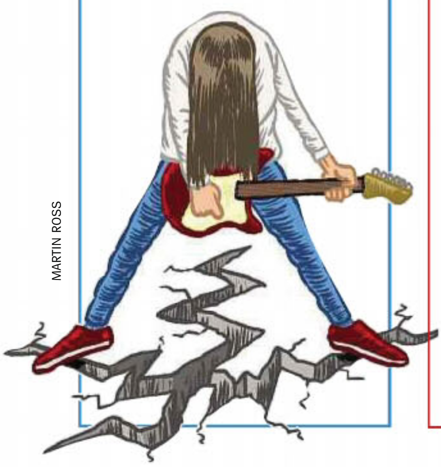
"Liver sausage pineapple" from the 1953 *Better Homes and Gardens New Cookbook* is perhaps the worst recipe ever published: Mix 1lb (450g) of liverwurst with ¼ cup of mayonnaise, Worcester sauce and lemon juice, shaped around a jelly mould and set with gelatine. Cover the whole with pineapple-flavoured icing, stud with stuffed olives and crown "with real pineapple top". Enjoy! *(Sydney) D.Telegraph, 7 April 2014.*

KICKING THE HABIT

A 23-year-old man who offered kicks to his private parts for £5 a time who told to desist by police in Kissimmee, Florida. *Sun, 26 July 2014.*

QUAKE SHAKES STATUS QUO

On 11 July, Jersey was hit by its biggest earthquake since 1926, just as BBC Radio Jersey was playing *Rockin' All Over The World* by Status Quo. The 4.6 (or 4.2) magnitude quake struck 12 miles (19km) west of St Helier at 12.54pm. "I could see the monitors in front of me shake," said DJ Sara Palmer. "It was really odd." *D.Telegraph, 12 July 2014.*



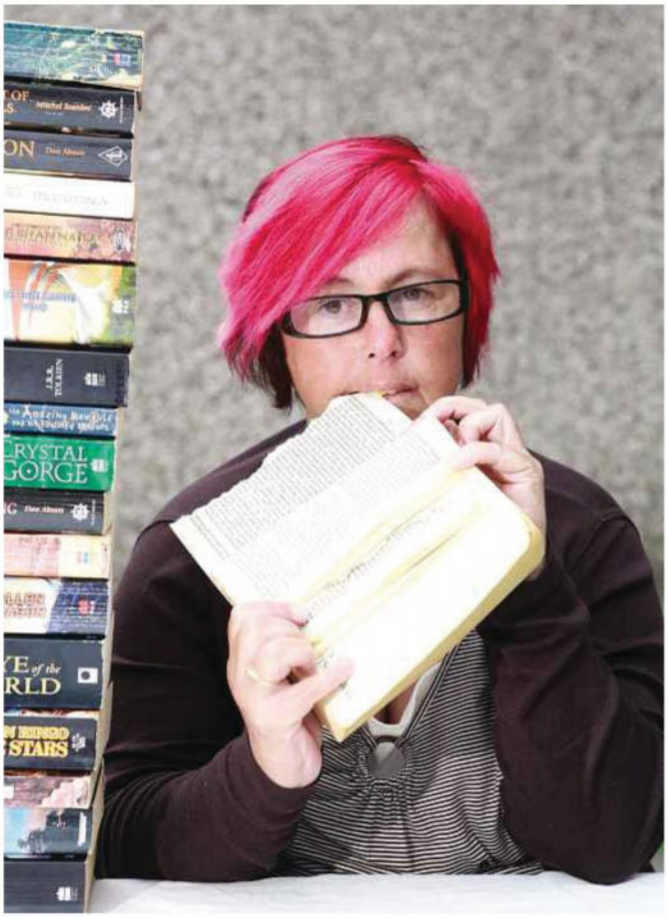
MARTIN ROSS

MEDICAL BAG

A woman who really loves books, one who hates newspapers and another who can't take static

- Anita Smith, 49, is a paperback biter – she has eaten more than 6,000 books, scoffing up to three paperbacks every day. "I can't go anywhere without a pocket-full of paper," she said. "The old musty books are my favourite." Her cravings began while she was pregnant with her second daughter Kym, now 24. Mrs Smith longed for the smell of bus tickets from childhood – a scent she rediscovered at the library. "I used to go in and eat lots and lots of library books," she said. "They never found out. I feel terrible about it. Now I buy books in markets or second-hand shops for 50p." The former insurance worker, from Bradford in West Yorkshire, said family and friends were aware – with her daughter Carrie Anne, 31, buying a stack for her every fortnight. *Sun, 27 June 2014.*

- Alice Rambridge, nine, of Preston, Lancashire, was diagnosed with ACC (agenesis of the corpus callosum) at 19 months. This means that the bridge connecting her cranial hemispheres is missing and she is immune to pain. "She has never once cried," said her mother Lindsay, 37, "and I began to wonder if she has any tear ducts. When she gets ill and is admitted to hospital, I can see that she is confused because she can't feel anything wrong. Nothing fazes her. She once put her finger on the hot stove and – while I was rushing round to get water to treat it – she was already playing as if nothing had happened." Only 57 cases of the condition have been recorded worldwide. It leaves parts of the brain undeveloped, causing mobility and speech problems. Alice also suffers from epilepsy, global development delay, problems swallowing, sensory difficulties, eczema, low muscle tone and a weak immune system – which causes her to often fall ill. However, her mother says: "It's hard to be upset when she just smiles." *dailymail.co.uk, 14 July; Sun, 15 July 2014.*



© ROSS PARRY / SWNS GROUP

ABOVE: Anita Smith, bibliophage

> **"I used to go in and eat lots and lots of library books"**

- Chelsey Reynolds, 22, of Witham in Essex, had been working 15-hour shifts as a trainee nurse, doing photo-shoots in her spare time for model agencies, but then she developed PoTS (postural tachycardia syndrome): every time she stands, her heart rate speeds up, causing her to pass out. She first felt the effects of PoTS during a shift at Broomfield Hospital in Chelmsford in October 2012. "It all happened out of the blue," she said. "One minute I was rushing about and the next thing I knew I'd fainted. I haven't been able to stand since. I have to use my wheelchair whenever I go out, and I've learnt to get about on my knees or my bum around the house… It's all just so surreal. I feel like I'm living in a weird parallel universe. But I won't let it get me down." The condition is not properly understood, but Ms Reynolds has been given medication to help alleviate the symptoms. *Metro, D.Telegraph, 30 May 2013.*

- Caitlin Wallace, 29, from Liverpool, collapses every time she gets a surprise. In 2010 she was diagnosed with cataplexy, meaning moments of extreme emotion cause muscular weakness. Laughter, anger, excitement or fear can all cause reactions, but for Mrs Wallace the trigger is surprise. Her response can range from a slackening of the facial muscles to weakness at the knees or total collapse. The phone ringing or a letter coming through the letterbox can send her crashing. The attacks – up to 20 a day – leave her paralysed for several minutes and, although she can hear everything, she cannot see. She also suffers from narcolepsy, which causes excessive daytime sleepiness. In fact, cataplexy is found only in narcoleptics.

She has been obliged to give up driving and her job as a receptionist at a dental practice. "I was in the supermarket recently and bumped into an old friend I hadn't seen for about five years," she said. "It was so unexpected that I collapsed. It's really embarrassing. With cataplexy you can't put your arms out to break your fall. You have no control and no way of stopping yourself from falling. I'm covered in bruises and scars." Her husband John, 35, a lift engineer, knows not to bear gifts of flowers or chocolates and made sure their wedding in June 2010 was a low-key affair. He always tries to catch her when she falls. *dailymail.co.uk, 24 Nov; Metro, Sun, 25 Nov 2011.*

• Diane Freelove, a 49-year-old mother of three from Rochester in Kent, is too scared to smell or touch a newspaper – and can barely bring herself to look at one. "I can't go anywhere near someone who has got one and, if they approach me, I freak out," she said. "I don't like the feel of them – if I touch a newspaper it feels like my skin is crawling. And I can't stand the smell, which I think is quite strong and distinctive." She believes her condition, called chloephobia, stems from a traumatic memory. "When I was a child," she said, "my mother hit my father over the head with a newspaper. She did it in a playful, friendly way but it worried me. I became afraid of newspapers gradually over the past 25 years." There's got to be more to it than that, surely… *Metro, D.Mirror, 28 Jan 2014.*

The first appearance of the word *chloephobia* in print appears to be in the *Western Daily Press* of Bristol in May 2013, according to worldwidewords.org. Its source and etymology are obscure. Greek *chloe* can refer to green things, especially grass and the first green shoots of spring, but this hardly fits the context. However, *chloephobia* appears on the answers.com website as the answer to the question "what is the fear of newspapers called?". The site's history function showed that it was first posted on 14 April 2008 (though this has since changed). As worldwidewords.org points out, this is "a disquieting (you might say horrifying) instance of the power of the unedited Internet to propagate error". Someone pointed out that *cliophobia* would be a better name: one sense of the classical Greek *kleos* was rumour or report, a fair description of the function of newspapers.

• Megan Stewart, now 16, from Wishaw in Lanarkshire, was born three months prematurely, weighing just 2lb 5oz (about 1kg). She had a diaphragmatic hernia (a hole in her diaphragm), which pushed her stomach into her chest, only allowing space for one lung to grow. She spent the first 18 months of her life in hospital. When she was 10, her mother Sharon was brushing her hair when she flopped over and her lips turned blue. Two months later, she was diagnosed with a condition called (unimaginatively) Hair Brushing Syndrome, recorded only once before in the medical literature. Victims of this have to avoid any kind of static as it triggers a potentially fatal reaction. Megan's mother said: "When we comb her hair we have to lie her down and cover her head with water to stop any static building up. She can't rub balloons on her head at parties." She must avoid wearing polyester. Megan also suffers from asthma and a condition called dorsal stream dysfunction, a problem with the connection between eye and brain that makes it difficult to see fast-moving objects, like footballs. "I think I know what my limits are," she said. "I don't let it affect me and I can still live a normal life." *dailymail.co.uk, D.Express, 18 Aug 2011.*

MEDAVIA.CO.UK

ABOVE: The chloephobic Diane Freelove.

SIDELINES…

WELL NAILED

Nigel Kirk, 62, was trying to fix a squeaky floorboard in his bathroom in Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire, when he tripped on a towel and landed on his nailgun, squeezing the trigger as he fell. The pneumatic gun shot a 2in (5cm) nail at 75mph (120km/h) into his chest, piercing his heart to a depth of half an inch (13mm). Luckily, it missed vital arteries and lodged in the muscle. He was hospitalised for a week and given the nail as a souvenir. *D.Star, 11 May 2014.*

FIRE ALARMS

A frantic caller dialled the police to report a "massive fire" in Ashford, Kent – but when firefighters arrived they found it was a red sunset. A driver stopped on a motorway hard shoulder after his dashboard reported a "fire". But it was part of the name of an Adele track he was listening to. This was one of a series of bizarre reasons given for pulling onto the hard shoulder without an emergency, which is illegal. *Sunday Mirror, 13 July; Metro, 22 July 2014.*

NO LAUGHING MATTER

More than 100 guests seated at tables during a Jongleurs Comedy Club night at the Oceana Club in Nottingham were showered with maggots falling from an air conditioning unit. They also fell on one of the comedians, causing him to storm off stage. The incident was caused by a pigeon getting stuck and dying in the air conditioning machinery. *D.Telegraph, Metro, 25 July 2014.*

MARTIN ROSS

SIDELINES...

BACKWARDS FOR PEACE

A man who started walking backwards 25 years ago in a bid to encourage world peace has now forgotten how to walk forwards. Mani Manithan, a mobile phone shop boss from Tamil Nadu in India, said his daily life is not affected by his habit. His first trek, in 1989, was a 300-mile (480km) slog to Chennai while naked. *Sun, 6 June 2014*.

SCORPION IN LONDON

A passenger on the London underground was shocked to discover a scorpion clinging to his bag as he waited for a train at Victoria station on 6 April. Staff captured the arachnid in a plastic lunch box. London Zoo identified it as a centruroides, a potentially dangerous species that may have come from the Caribbean. The passenger said he had been sitting in a park all day and had not been abroad recently. *BBC News, 2 May 2014.*

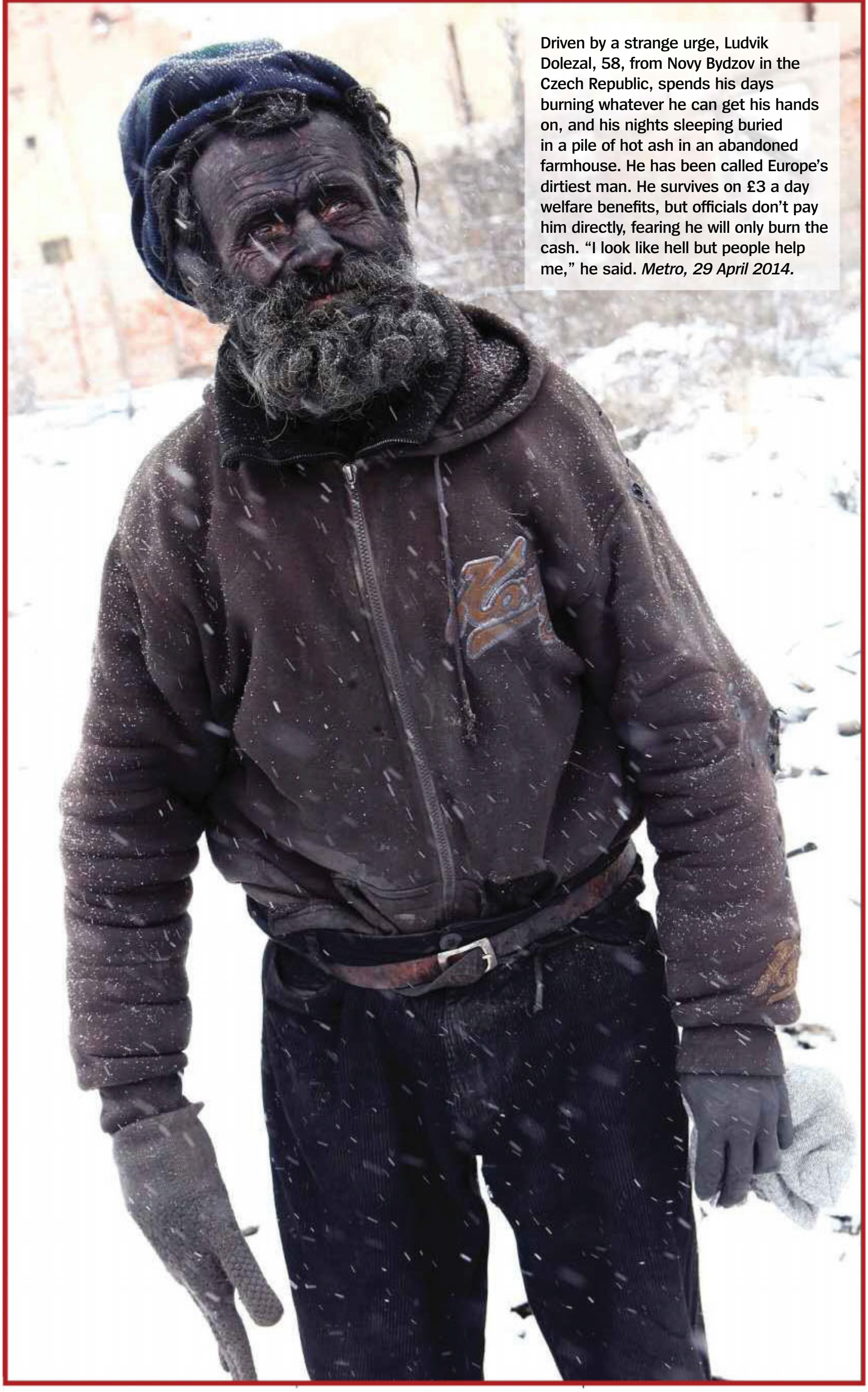
ELEPHANT SURPRISE

Walking on a beach in New Mexico, a group of friends on a stag party found a perfectly preserved three-million-year-old elephant skull. The party was hiking in Elephant Butte Lake State Park near Albuquerque when they spotted the skull emerging from the sand. It came from a stegomastodon – a prehistoric ancestor of today's elephants, which died our about 10,000 years ago. *D.Telegraph, 17 June 2014*.

VANDAL COLLARED

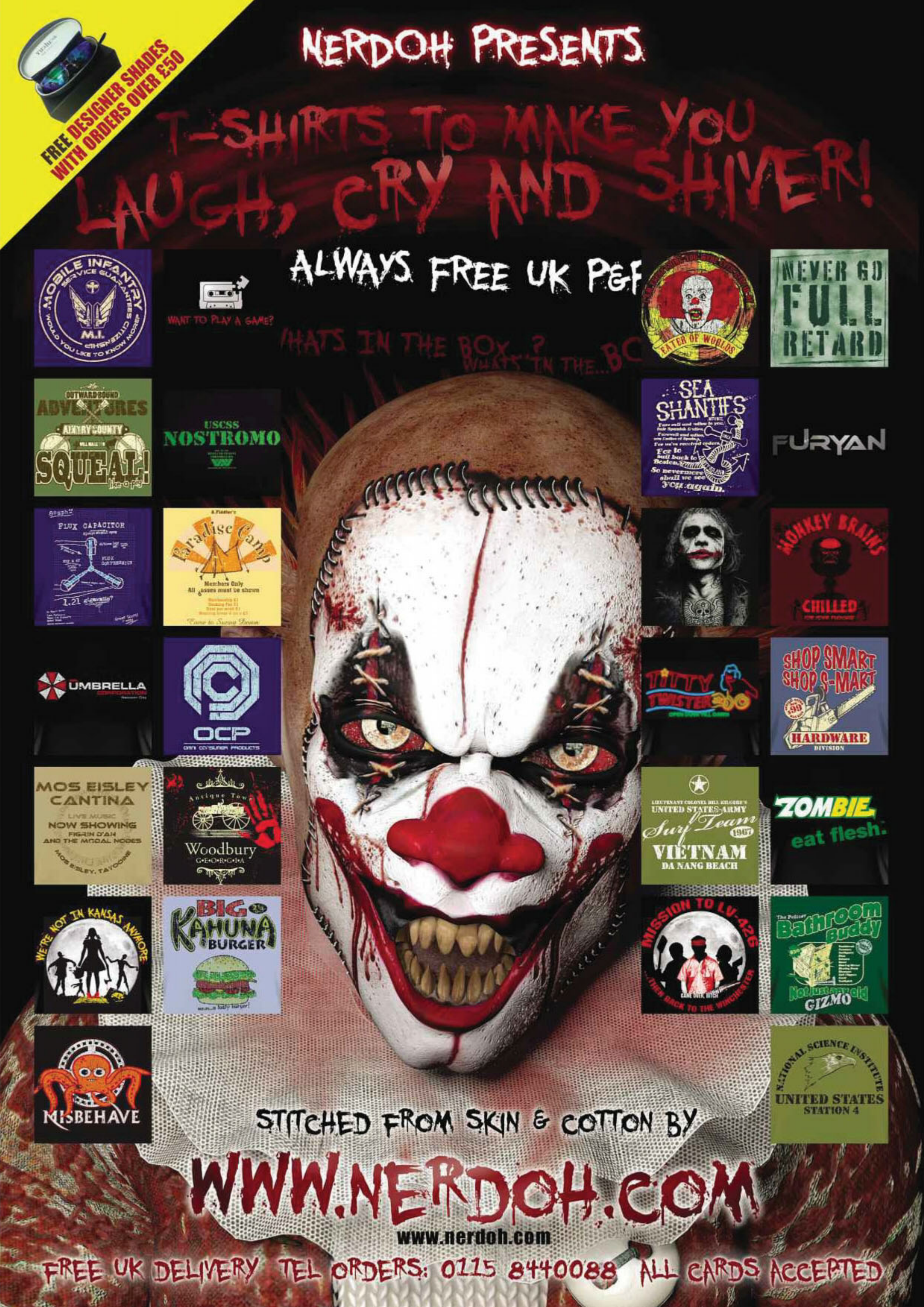
Residents in Brampton, Cumbria, upset that their car tyres had been left repeatedly punctured over six months, set up CCTV cameras and found the culprit was not a feral youth as they suspected, but a border collie called Jess. She had been sinking her teeth into tyres while on a daily walk with her owner, leaving slow punctures. Surprised owner Edward Morgan promised to keep her on a lead in future. *D.Telegraph, D.Mail, 17 April 2014.*

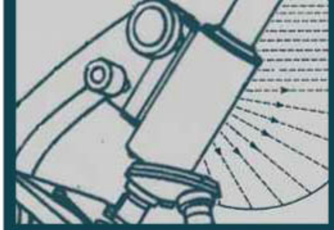
EUROPE'S DIRTIEST MAN?



Driven by a strange urge, Ludvik Dolezal, 58, from Novy Bydzov in the Czech Republic, spends his days burning whatever he can get his hands on, and his nights sleeping buried in a pile of hot ash in an abandoned farmhouse. He has been called Europe's dirtiest man. He survives on £3 a day welfare benefits, but officials don't pay him directly, fearing he will only burn the cash. "I look like hell but people help me," he said. *Metro, 29 April 2014.*

PROFIMEDIA / SWNS.COM


NERDOH PRESENTS
T-SHIRTS TO MAKE YOU LAUGH, CRY AND SHIVER!
FREE DESIGNER SHADES WITH ORDERS OVER £50
ALWAYS FREE UK P&P
WHATS IN THE BOX...? WHATS IN THE...BOX
MOBILE INFANTRY
WANT TO PLAY A GAME?
EATER OF WORLDS
NEVER GO FULL RETARD
ADVENTURES
SQUEAL!
USCSS NOSTROMO
SEA SHANTIES
FURYAN
FLUX CAPACITOR
Paradise Camp
MONKEY BRAINS
CHILLED
UMBRELLA CORPORATION
OCP
OMNI CONSUMER PRODUCTS
TITTY TWISTER
SHOP SMART SHOP S-MART
HARDWARE
MOS EISLEY CANTINA
Woodbury GEORGIA
UNITED STATES ARMY
Surf Team
VIETNAM
DA NANG BEACH
ZOMBIE eat flesh.
WE'RE NOT IN KANSAS ANYMORE
BIG KAHUNA BURGER
MISSION TO LV-426
Bathroom Buddy
GIZMO
MISBEHAVE
NATIONAL SCIENCE INSTITUTE
UNITED STATES
STATION 4
STITCHED FROM SKIN & COTTON BY
WWW.NERDOH.COM
www.nerdoh.com
FREE UK DELIVERY TEL ORDERS: 0115 8440088 ALL CARDS ACCEPTED



MATT PATTINSON

MONKEY GLAND COCKTAILS

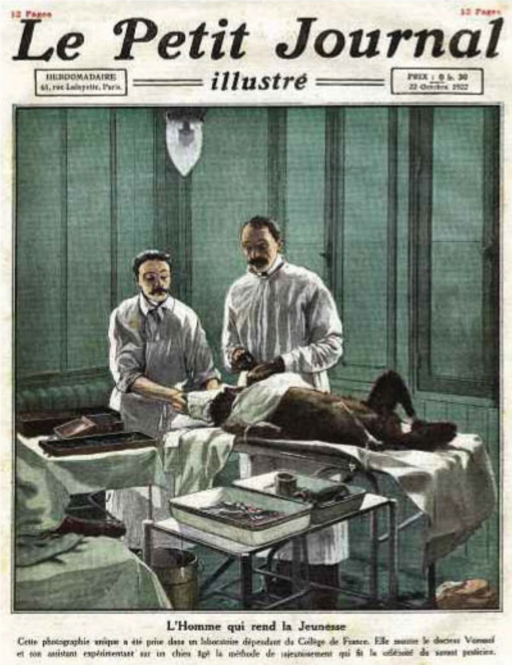
Dr Serge Voronoff offered the hope of eternal youth and increased virility by implanting the testicles of apes into humans. **DAVID HAMBLING** recalls a bizarre medical craze.

At the start of the 20th century, transplantation was a new and exciting field with limitless potential. When Dr Serge Voronoff revealed a new type of animal-to-human transplant operation with remarkable rejuvenating effects in 1920, it seemed just about plausible. Clients flocked to receive Voronoff's bizarre treatment and recover their youthful vigour. He was soon discredited, but a spin-off from what were euphemistically termed 'monkey glands' still has millions of followers.

Voronoff's results, published in the *Lancet* and *Scientific American*, described over 500 experiments in transplanting testicles from young sheep, goats and cattle into older animals. Voronoff claimed this made the old animal young again, and illustrated his paper with before and after pictures. Voronoff described himself as Head of Experimental Surgery at the College de France. The College was a distinguished institution, but had no students or experimental facilities. Voronoff was, not to put too fine a point on it, a quack.

Like any good quack, Voronoff was quick to take advantage of the publicity his research had gained, and also in 1920 he started performing surgery on humans. Testicles were removed from an ape, sliced into small sections and implanted into human testes, where, according to Voronoff, they boosted vitality and potency.

To prove the operation's efficacy, Voronoff showed off 74-year-old Arthur Liardet, a former Indian Army officer, who also happened to be a former actor. Before the operation, which Voronoff had performed for free, Liardet walked with the aid of a stick, his brain was sluggish, and he had been sexually inactive for 12 years. Afterwards, Liardet appeared at least 15 years younger, in full possession of his mental and physical faculties, and was enjoying a new sex life with his younger wife.



12 Pages

Le Petit Journal illustré

HEBDOMADAIRE
61, rue Lafayette, Paris.

PRIX : 0 fr. 30
22 Octobre 1922

L'Homme qui rend la Jeunesse

©LEE/LEEMAGE / GETTY IMAGES

Monkey glands were one of the great medical fads of the age

Voronoff held a press conference at which Liardet and his wife both declared themselves completely satisfied. Liardet suggested that, as the surgery could be carried out repeatedly, he expected to live to 150. [1]

Voronoff soon had an extensive list of clients. Few were willing to admit to having been a patient, but those treated were believed to have included King Carol of Romania, Turkish president Kemal Ataturk, American industrialist Harold McCormick and French writer Anatole France. Major Frank Buckley, chairman of Wolverhampton Wanderers, found Voronoff's treatment so effective he recommended the whole team should undergo it.

The price for the operation soared to around $5,000 and Voronoff needed his own menagerie to supply raw material. There were numerous newspaper articles and as many jokes, and Harry's Bar invented a Monkey Gland cocktail – gin and orange with a few drops of absinthe and grenadine.

Voronoff had plenty of critics from the start. Other researchers failed to replicate his animal results, finding that the testicular tissue was quickly absorbed with no functional effect. Any remaining thickening where the graft had been carried out was just scar tissue, and any benefits were down to the placebo effect. Voronoff gradually fell out of favour and was widely ridiculed. By the 1930s the media gave the impression that nobody had ever believed in monkey glands.

Monkey glands were one of the great medical fads of the last century; but anyone who follows modern medical trends will have noticed something remarkably similar. Prescriptions for testosterone supplements in the US quadrupled between 2000 and 2011, when over five million prescriptions were handed out.

"The possibilities of testosterone therapy are enticing," starts the Mayo Clinics page on the treatment. "Increase your muscle mass, sharpen your memory and concentration, boost your libido, and improve your energy level." [2]

Some of the less restrained mass-market adverts make testosterone supplements sound like a magical formula for aging males to recover lost strength, energy and in particular sexual potency. The advertising works because of the powers ascribed to testosterone, sometimes called 'the male hormone' even though it is also present in females. Testosterone is secreted by the testes (and female ovaries) and is responsible for male characteristics in puberty – chest hair, lowered voice, muscle mass and remodelling of the facial bones.

In adults, testosterone is linked with behaviours characterised as typically male – competitiveness, risk-taking and dominance. It generally declines with age and the idea is that testosterone replacement therapy will, like monkey glands, restore the patient to their youthful state. At least no animals are harmed this time around; treatment involves injections of testosterone enanthate, a synthetic version of the naturally occurring hormone.

However, studies suggest that lower testosterone levels are not associated specifically with aging, and decline is generally related to obesity, smoking and depression. Nor is the treatment quite as effective as it might first appear. Although it can increase muscle mass, studies have not found any consistent improvement in physical function. Adverts suggest that constant tiredness is due to low testosterone, but clinical trials have not yet shown whether testosterone supplements has any impact on fatigue.

Perhaps most significantly, in tests the therapy produces only produces a moderate increase in libido, and has no effect on erectile dysfunction or overall sexual satisfaction.[3]

Testosterone therapy does have some benefits, but possible side effects include heart attacks and blood clots, and it is not recommended for general use.[4] The medical quest for the fountain of youth continues; in the meantime, beware of slick adverts and simian spare-part surgery.

NOTES

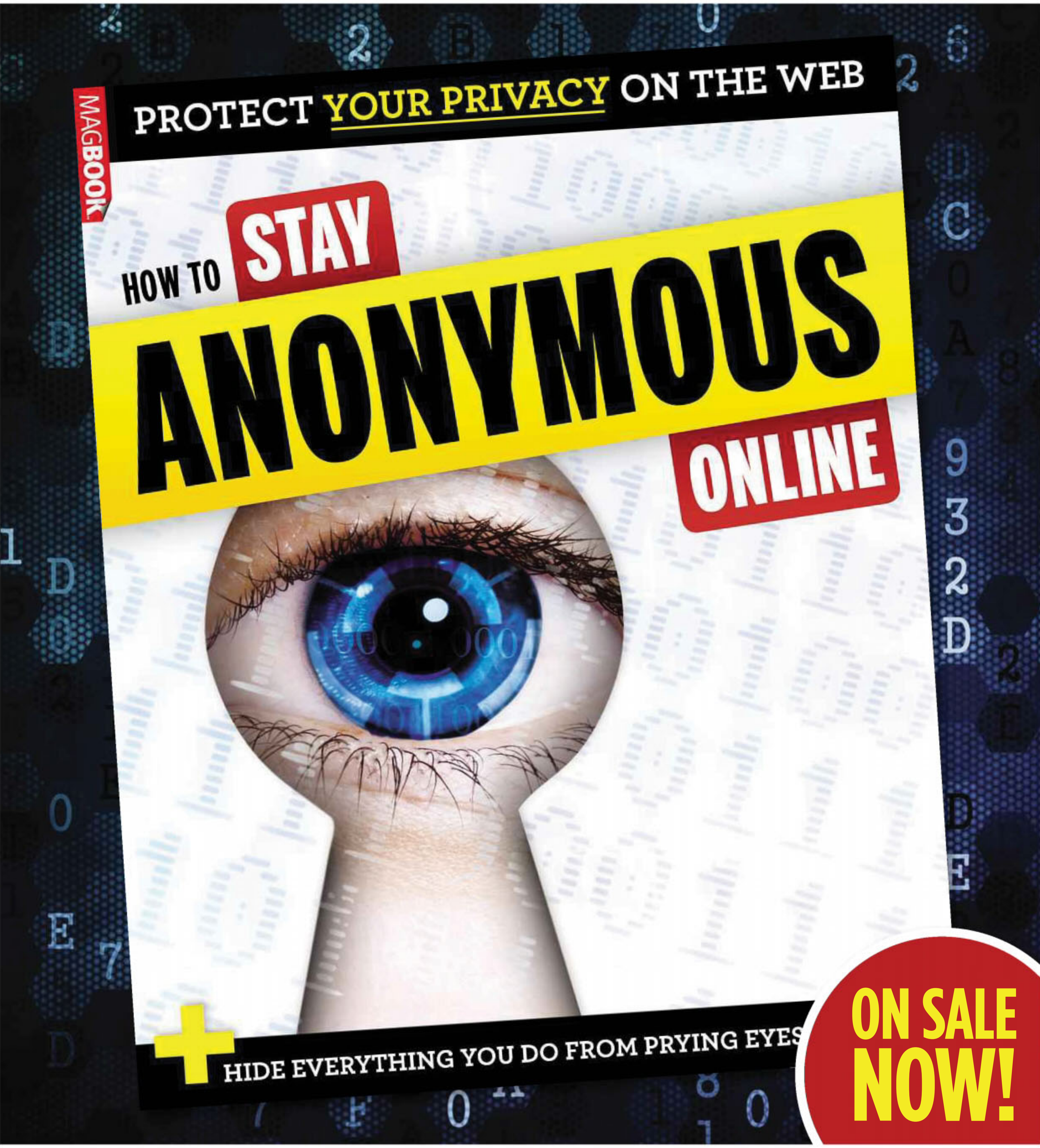
1 *The King Kong Syndrome* by John Baxter (CB Creative Books, 2014).

2 www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-living/sexual-health/in-depth/testosterone-therapy/art-20045728

3 www.newscientist.com/article/mg22329760.600-man-up-is-testosterone-an-elixir-of-youth.html

4 www.nature.com/nrendo/journal/v9/n7/abs/nrendo.2013.73.html

SECRET NEW WAYS
TO STOP THE WEB WATCHING YOU

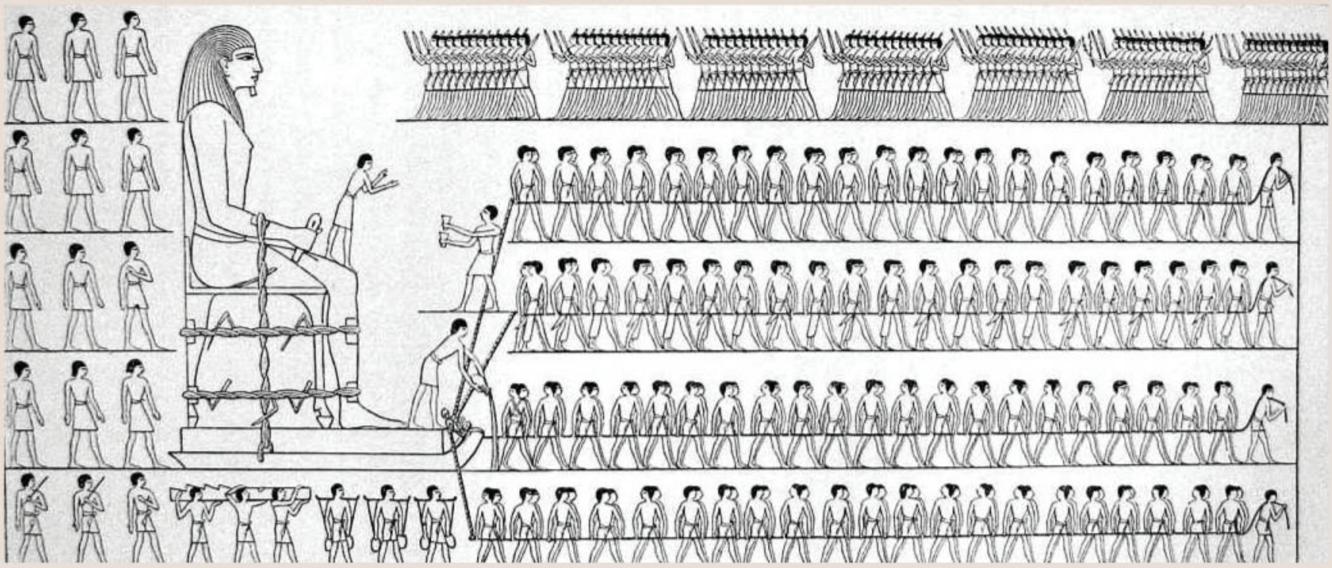

MAGBOOK
PROTECT YOUR PRIVACY ON THE WEB
HOW TO STAY ANONYMOUS ONLINE
+ HIDE EVERYTHING YOU DO FROM PRYING EYES
ON SALE NOW!

Order your print or digital MagBook at magbooks.com

MATT PATTINSON

ARCHÆOLOGY

PAUL SIEVEKING contrasts ancient Egyptian builders' technology for moving heavy objects with their modern counterparts' inability to shift JCBs, and notes the discovery of a long-haired giant on Donegal's Cruit Island

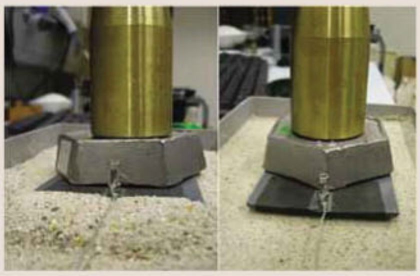


ABOVE: Experiments suggest that water poured onto sand, as shown in a painting from the tomb of Djehutihotep, reduced friction and helped move giant statues.

MOVING PYRAMID STONES

Solving the riddle of how the ancient Egyptians moved massive stone blocks to build the pyramids involves wet sand, according to a new study. Physicists at the University of Amsterdam investigated the forces needed to pull weighty objects on a giant sled over desert sand, and discovered that dampening the sand in front of the sled reduces friction, making it easier to operate. The researchers found a clue in a wall painting from about 1900 BC in the ancient tomb of Djehutihotep. This depicts 172 men hauling an immense statue using ropes attached to a sledge, while a man stands on the front of the sledge, pouring water over the sand. "Egyptologists thought it was a purely ceremonial act," said study lead author Daniel Bonn, a physics professor at the University of Amsterdam. "The question was: Why did they do it?"

The researchers constructed miniature sleds and tried pulling heavy objects through trays of sand. When they dragged the sleds over dry sand, clumps built up in front of the contraptions, requiring more force to pull them across; but adding water to the sand increased its stiffness, enabling the sleds to glide more easily across the surface. Droplets of water create bridges between the grains of sand, helping them stick together, as anyone building a sandcastle discovers. But, there is a delicate balance: "If you use dry sand, it won't work as well, but if the sand is too wet, it won't work either," Bonn said. "There's an optimum stiffness." The optimal amount of water typically falls between two and five per cent of the volume of sand. "It turns out that wetting Egyptian deserts and can reduce the friction by quite a bit, which implies you need only half of the people to pull a sledge on wet sand, compared to dry sand," Bonn said. *Physical Review Letters, 29 April; livescience.com, 1 May 2014.*



UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

ABOVE: Mini sleds moved better over damp sand.

DONEGAL GIANT

A team of research scientists are seeking permission to exhume the skeleton of one of Ireland's tallest men. The body of the man, measured by the gardaí and found to be 7ft 8in (2.34m) tall, was discovered on Cruit Island in Co Donegal, north-western Ireland, during roadworks in 1964. It was just 8in (20cm) below the surface and a mere 150 yards (137m) from the waterline, which meant it could have been washed up. It is estimated the man was in his late teens or early 20s. He was interred a short distance away at Cill Bhride cemetery on Cruit Island but his identity and background remain a mystery. Bizarrely, local people believe the giant's headstone was erected in the wrong place in the graveyard. Brendan Holland, one of the researchers, reckons that judging by the man's long hair, he could be anything up to 500 years old. He says that exhuming the skeleton and removing a tooth and some bone fragments would possibly tell us quite a lot about the man, such as his age, state of health, diet, place of origin, and whether he suffered from pituitary gigantism. His height, if confirmed, puts him among the tallest two to three per cent in the world.

The man known famously as "the Irish Giant" is Patrick Cotter (1760–1806), who adopted O'Brien as his stage name in the sideshow circuit. He was the first person in medical history to stand at a verified 8ft (2.44m). His remains were examined in 1972 and his height verified as 8ft 1in (2.46m). His giant boots are on display in the Kinsale Museum. *Irish Examiner, 31 Jan 2014.*

ENTOMBED DIGGERS

Wealthy homeowners who have added new basement floors are leaving a trail of entombed diggers around London because they are cheaper to bury than lift to street level. Property experts estimate there could be up to 1,000 JCBs buried in the capital, worth around £5 million in total. These may well leave archæologists of the future scratching their heads: were the machines, perhaps, extravagant foundation sacrifices? In the past, developers would have used a large crane to scoop up the digger, but this is a costly and time-consuming process. Now, in what is considered standard operating practice, they cover the digger with hardcore – a mixture of sand and gravel, with a layer of concrete poured over the top. In some of the newest extensions of expensive houses, basement conversion specialists have encountered difficulties as they try to tuck "sub-basements" beneath the existing floors. They are increasingly coming across abandoned diggers from the last round of improvements. *D.Telegraph, 6 June 2014.*

CELTIC FALSE TOOTH

An iron tooth implant fitted about 2,300 years ago has been found in the grave of a young woman in northern France. The corroded piece of metal is the same size and shape as the other incisors from her upper jaw – which did not survive as the timber tomb collapsed and crushed her skull – and its appearance may originally have been improved by a wooden or ivory covering. The implant, the oldest of its kind discovered in Western Europe, is 400 years older than one from another grave in France, found in the 1990s at Essonne. The young man in that grave had lost all his top left molars, so the iron implant was probably to help him chew. The new find replaced the only tooth lost by the woman, which would have caused her no practical problems but would have been very visible, being the central maxillary incisor.

The woman was buried in a richly furnished timber chamber, originally surrounded by a wooden fence, near the graves of three other women, at Le Chêne, southeast of Paris. Buried with her were bronze torcs, anklets and bracelets, brooches and belt ornaments, coral and amber necklaces, and an iron currency bar, all in an elaborately constructed burial chamber and enclosure.

False or replacement teeth have been discovered in skulls from ancient Egypt, including a 5,500-year-old one made of shell, intended to make the body as complete as possible for the afterlife. A bone tooth was found in a 7,000-year-old skull from Algeria. False teeth made of bone, or recycled animal teeth, were also used by elite Etruscan women in Italy, where the Celts had trading connections and may have got the idea.

The archæologists made some gruesome calculations about how far the spike would have been hammered into the pulp canal of nerves and blood vessels to anchor it soundly. She may already have been dead when it was done, to improve the appearance of her corpse for the funeral service. If she were still alive it would have been an agonising process, and could have resulted in a fatal infection. *Guardian, D.Mail, BBC News, 28 May; Antiquity, June; livescience.com, 14 July 2014.*

CLASSICAL CORNER

FORTEANA FROM THE ANCIENT WORLD COMPILED BY BARRY BALDWIN

180: BEYOND THE VICAR OF DIBLEY

"Nothing improves by translation, except a bishop" (old saying, variously attributed).

So, the dear old Church of England, once dubbed 'The Conservative Party at Prayer', where, according to Sir Humphrey Appleby, God is an optional extra, has approved women bishops. As during the earlier kerfuffle over female priesting, I again wondered if anyone had gone back to the first century AD for possible theological justification.

Here we have a nice little ecclesiastical mystery. In his *Epistles*, bk10 no96, para8, Pliny the Younger reports to emperor Trajan from Bithynia where he was governor on his investigations into the local brouhaha over a "degenerate sort of cult carried to extravagant lengths," called Christianity; his friend Tacitus (*Annals,* bk15 ch44) likewise dubbed it "a pernicious superstition". Detailing his official enquiries, Pliny assures Trajan that "it was necessary to extract the truth *ex duabus ancillis, quæ ministræ dicebantur*."

There is much dispute on how to translate and interpret these words. *Ancilla* (whence English 'ancillary') usually means 'slave-girl' or 'hand-maiden'. *Ministræ* obviously connotes 'Ministers'. Point is, this is a feminine noun. The Loeb and Penguin translations (both by Betty Radice) translate it as 'Deaconesses", as does Marcel Durry in his French Budé version, an equation approved by the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* and the *Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church*; cf. Aimé Georges Martimort, *Deaconesses: An Historical Study* (1986), *passim*, esp. pp23–6.

Some (e.g. AN Sherwin-White in his brobdingnagian 1966 *Commentary*, albeit otherwise evading the larger issues) think Pliny's *Ministræ* is a translation of *Diakonoi*, Bithynia being an Eastern Greek-speaking province. This looks like a masculine form, but (see later) came to assume a common grammatical gender. It is a term of many meanings and nuances (see GW Lampe's *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* for a cornucopia of annotated examples), one of which hints at female Church officials.

At Romans 16. 1, Paul writes (in the King James version, the only one to use – ignore all these rubbishy modern demotic abominations), "I commend unto you Phoebe or sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea. That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatever business she hath need of you; for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also."

He goes on: "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my helpers in Christ Jesus." I'm afraid another Greek lesson is needed here. Paul's word for 'servant' is the aforementioned *diakonon*, coupled with the feminine form of the present participle for 'being'. As Elizabeth McCabe points out ("A Re-examination of Phoebe as a 'Diakonos' and 'Prostatis'; Exposing the Inaccuracies of English translations", SBI Forum, online), *Diakonos* is the same word Paul six times uses to describe his own ministry (cf. also the on-line article "Christianity: Doctrine and Ethics", by 'Rattlesnake6', contesting a piece Dr Tim Keller in *Faith*, autumn 2008, arguing that these Roman deaconesses were commissioned rather than ordained).

Paul goes on to describe Phoebe as a *Prostatis*. This creates a complication, the word occurring nowhere else in extant texts, Christian or pagan. However, its cognate verb occurs eight times in the New Testament, always connoting someone in a position of authority. Again as McCabe observes, Phoebe is tied to a specific church, unlike Priscilla and Aquila who are Paul's *Synergois* ('Co-Workers'), "making her appointment a local function. Furthermore, the combination of *diakonon* with *ousan* points more to a recognised ministry or a position of responsibility within the congregation."

("Don't Force it, Phoebe! – catch-phrase of Ted Ray, 'Ray's a Laugh')

By the fourth century, the feminine form *Diaconassa* had become established in both Greek and Latin. More telling, though, are two inscriptions from the same period. The first, from a tombstone in Jerusalem at the Mount of Olives, salutes a woman called Sophia, described with the feminine definite article as "The Deaconess, the Second Phoebe". The other one, also a tombstone epitaph, describes a certain Maria as "The Deaconess;" cf. (ed.) GHR Horsley, *New Documents Illustrating Early Christianity: A Review of the Greek Inscriptions and Papyri Published in 1979* (Macquarie University, 1987).

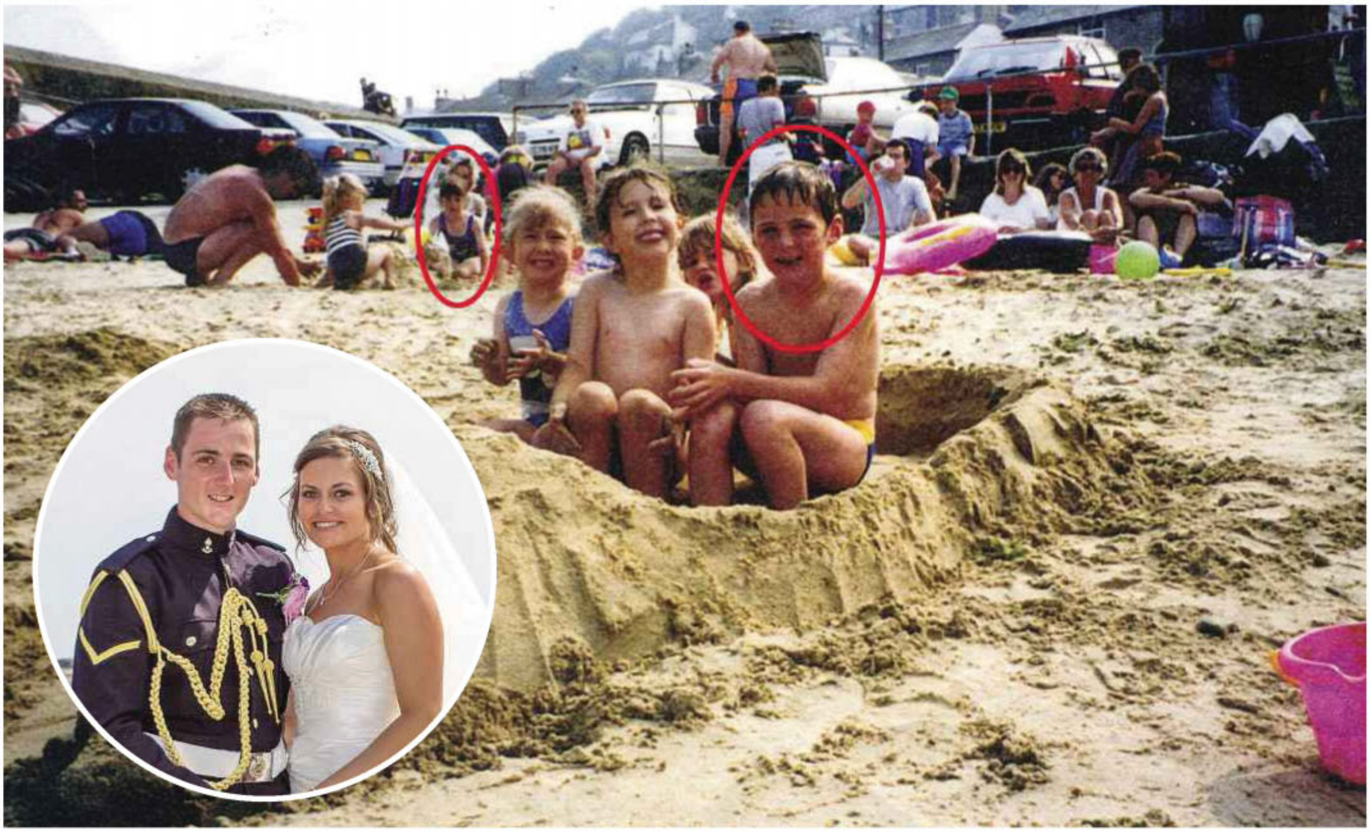
Have to return a Scottish 'Not Proven' verdict. But the evidences overall, especially the inscriptional, point strongly towards ordained Deaconesses. If so, this knocks the props from under Anglican and Catholic opponents of real-life Dawn Frenchs. The central misogynist argument is that Christ only had male apostles, therefore... But this is easily explained. Jesus was first and foremost a Jew, catering to the Judaic tradition of male-only rabbis.

Deaconesses, though, are straws in the wind, compared to the starring roles of women in Græco-Roman religion, notably the Pythia at Delphi and the Vestal Virgins of Rome.

"I'm a God Girl, that's who I'll be" – Jamie Grace.

CHILDREN REUNITED

Newlywed couple's paths crossed as kids, and two tsunami victims are back with their parents



SWNS.COM

ABOVE: The couple who were married a minute's walk from where they could have met as kids. **BELOW:** Tsunami victim Raudhtal (second from right) is back with her family.

HOLIDAY SNAP!

A couple who grew up on opposite sides of the country were looking at old family photographs before their wedding when they came across a picture of themselves as children on the beach at Mousehole in Cornwall. Teacher Aimee Maiden, 25, from Cornwall, and soldier Nick Wheeler, 26, from Kent, had no idea their paths had crossed until they saw the snap taken in 1994 – 11 years before they met in sixth-form college in Truro. They were engaged last year and found the photo at Nick Wheeler's grandparents' house before marrying in July – a minute's walk from where the photograph was taken by Nick's grandfather. Nick, six, is seen building a boat in the sand with his sister and cousins, and Aimee recognised herself aged five in the background. *Metro, Sun, D.Telegraph, 1 Aug 2014.*

AFP / GETTY IMAGES

TSUNAMI GIRL LOST AND FOUND

An Indonesian couple claim to have found their daughter who got swept from home by the Boxing Day tsunami of 2004. Raudhtul (or Raudhatul, or Ranudhatul) Jannah, now 14, was given up for dead when the wave hit the family home in west Aceh district, carrying her and her elder brother, Arif Pratama Rangkuti, seven, out to sea on a wooden board. Their 42-year-old mother, Jamaliah (who like many Indonesians uses only one name), and her husband, Septi Rangkuti, 52, escaped the floodwaters and spent a month searching for their children, eventually accepting that they were among the 227,000 killed by the tsunami in 14 countries. They then moved house with their one surviving son and carried on with their lives.

Then in June this year, Jamaliah's brother spotted a girl in the village of Aceh Barat Daya walking home from school who bore a striking resemblance to the missing child. He asked around and discovered the girl had been caught up in the tsunami and was swept 60 miles (100km) south-west from Aceh to the remote Banyak Islands. Jamaliah and her husband visited the girl and discovered – or convinced themselves – it was their daughter. "The girl's face resembles mine," said Jamaliah. "I'm ready for DNA tests."

Following the media coverage of the reunion, the couple also found their son Arif. He had been living for years as a street orphan on the island of Sumatra, sleeping in outdoor markets and abandoned shops. Jamaliah, speaking in the town of Payakumbuh in West Sumatra, wept as she clutched the 17-year-old boy, who seemed shy and overwhelmed. The family were reunited at the home of a couple who had found the boy one night asleep outside the Internet café they run in Payakumbuh. Lana Bestari and Windu Fajri had let the boy sleep at the café for several months, giving him food and clothes.

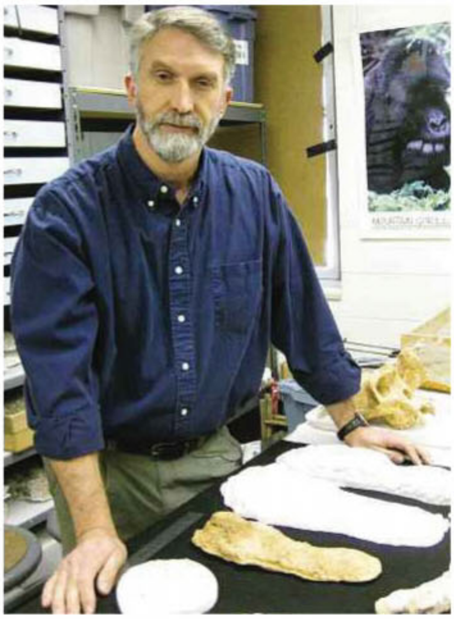
Bestari contacted the family after she saw a photograph of Arif as a child on television. Even after a decade, she said she instantly recognised him as the boy who had slept at her café. He had told her only that he had come from Medan in North Sumatra; if he is indeed the couple's son, it's not known how he made the journey there from Aceh.

The couple now believe their children were rescued together by fishermen who took them to the Banyak Islands. Raudhtul was taken in by a family in Aceh Barat Daya, who renamed her Wenni. A fisherman wanted to adopt both, but ended up taking just Raudhtul as he did not think his family could provide for two more children. *D.Telegraph, 9+20 Aug; Metro, 8 Aug; (Sydney) D.Telegraph, (Sydney) Morning Herald, Guardian, 9 Aug 2014.*

ALIEN ZOO

KARL SHUKER presents his regular round-up from the cryptozoological garden

NEW CALL FOR BIGFOOT HAIR SAMPLES



Veteran bigfoot/sasquatch researcher Prof Don Jeffrey Meldrum (right), based at Idaho State University, recently posted on various social media sites the following request for bigfoot hair samples, which will be subjected to DNA analysis in an attempt to uncover the taxonomic identity of their species:

I have a very specific request to make at this time. An opportunity has arisen to conduct morphological and DNA analysis of selected hair samples attributed to sasquatch. I am looking for reliable samples, by that I mean with a known chain of custody, having been collected in association with a visual encounter or documented footprints. Respond only if you have such a sample in your possession, stored in paper envelope, having been collected under reasonably sterile conditions, i.e. minimal or no direct handling.

Respond to my email address only: meldd@isu.edu. All other posts or responses regarding this request will be promptly deleted from my timeline. Thanks for your assistance.

Previous attempts to analyse alleged bigfoot samples have been highly controversial (those of Dr Melba Ketchum from DNA Diagnostics, Inc) or inconclusive, all hairs being shown to have originated from known, common species (the DNA analyses conducted by Prof Bryan Sykes from Oxford University). But perhaps this time, if bigfoot truly exists, some samples will be obtained that unequivocally resolve the longstanding mystery of its zoological status. So if anyone reading this owns putative bigfoot hair samples meeting Prof Meldrum's criteria, why not post them to him? *http://cryptosightings.com/bigfoot-dna-study-being-led-by-dr-jeff-meldrum-submit-your-possible-bigoot-hairs 25 July 2014.*

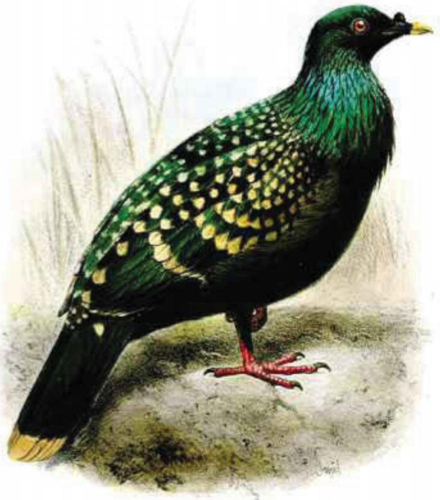
A NOVEL SEARCH FOR THE THYLACINE

Also referred to as the Tasmanian wolf, Tasmanian tiger or simply Tassie, the deceptively canine, stripe-backed marsupial known formally as the thylacine *Thylacinus cynocephalus* officially became extinct in 1936, but numerous unconfirmed sightings have been reported since then, inspiring many searches for this most cryptic of Antipodean cryptids. The latest one is currently being planned by Edinburgh-based crime novelist Tony Black, who has been researching the thylacine for the past 10 years, ever since he first learnt of it while working as a journalist in Australia. He began as a sceptic, but his continuing investigations have gradually converted him into believing that it may indeed still survive. *http://www.heraldscotland.com/news/home-news/novel-take-on-extinct-tiger.24987210 8 Aug 2014.*

A DODO-RELATED LIVER BIRD!

One of the world's most enigmatic mystery birds is the spotted green pigeon *Caloenas maculata*, also known as the Liverpool pigeon due to the fact that its only surviving representative is preserved at Liverpool's World Museum. (A second one, formerly present in the collection of Sir Joseph Banks, is now lost). So mysterious is this lone specimen, first documented in 1783, that even its provenance is unknown, though some ornithologists have suggested that it may have been collected in Tahiti or elsewhere in French Polynesia. In the past, it has been variously categorised as a valid species in its own right, or as a freak, green-plumaged variant of the nicobar pigeon *C. nicobarica* from southern Asia.

However, following recent analyses of DNA extracted from two feathers derived from the Liverpool specimen and performed by a trio of scientists led by Dr Tim Heupink from Australia's Griffith University, it has been confirmed as a separate species, closely related to the nicobar pigeon but possessing its own unique DNA barcode. Moreover, it has also been shown to be closely allied to the extinct Mauritius dodo and Rodriguez solitaire. DNA studies like this are becoming increasingly significant in revealing the hitherto long-hidden identities of anomalous specimens such as the Liverpool pigeon. Indeed, as commented upon by Dr Heupink: "This study improves our ability to identify novel species from historic remains, and also those that are not novel after all. Ultimately this will help us to measure and understand the extinction of local populations and entire species". *www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2014/07/140715214301.htm 15 July; www.biomedcentral.com/1471-2148/14/136 16 July 2014.*



HOLY GRAIL NEWS

A UK Holy Grail is nicked, one of Spain's has been 'dated', Joseph of Aramathea is buried in Wales and China's 'grail' is auctioned

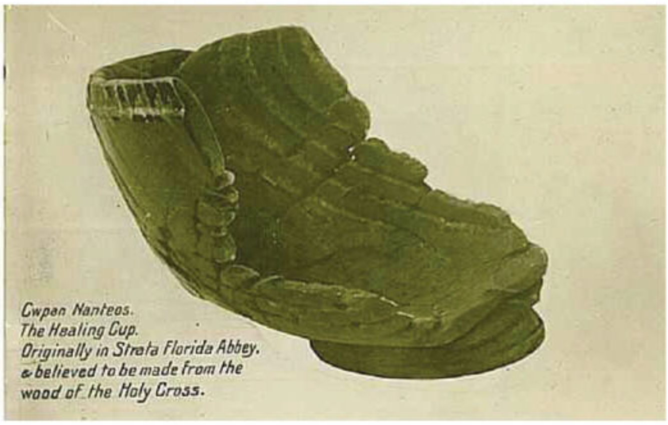
NANTEOS CUP

Some time between 7 July and 14 July, burglars broke into a property in Weston-under-Penyard, Herefordshire, and stole a blue velvet bag containing the Nanteos Cup, thought by some to be the legendary Holy Grail from which Jesus drank at the Last Supper. Or had it been fashioned from a piece of the True Cross? Or was it used to catch Christ's blood after he was taken down from the Cross? According to dodgy legend, the ancient cup, named after the mansion where it was once kept, was brought to Britain by Joseph of Arimathea, some time after the Crucifixion. Joseph allegedly founded a religious settlement in Glastonbury, where the cup came into the safekeeping of monks. At the Dissolution of the Monasteries, so one story goes, seven Cistercian monks fled Glastonbury for Strata Florida Abbey in Ceredigion, whence they brought the cup to Nanteos, near Aberystwyth, for safe-keeping.

The grail, a golden serving dish, wondrous but not explicitly holy, first appeared in *Percival le Gallois*, an unfinished romance written between 1135 and 1190 by Chretien de Troyes. Subsequently, the Holy Grail has been variously characterised as a dish, plate, stone or cup; it is said to be buried in Glastonbury, Rosslyn Chapel, Oak Island (Nova Scotia), the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, Genoa Cathedral, Montserrat, Fort Knox… you name it. There are more than 200 objects in European collections claiming its identity. Mainstream historians see it as a literary fiction, a symbol rather than a real object.

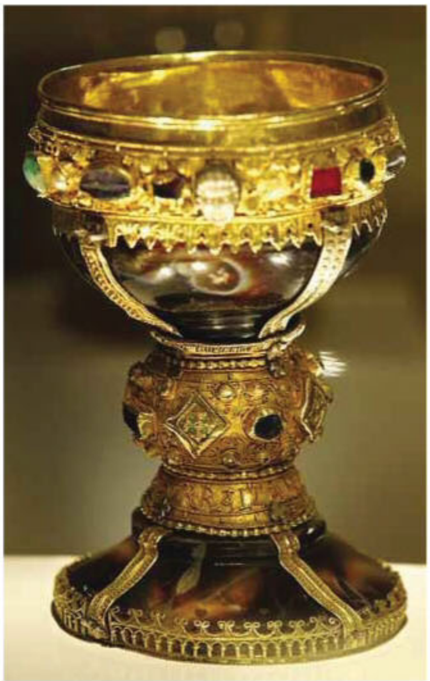
Over the last century or so, the Nanteos Cup, 5in (12.7cm) in diameter and 3in (7.6cm) deep, gained a reputation for magical healing powers. It is now in a very poor state as a result of the faithful biting chunks out of it to aid their recovery from ills. It currently belongs to Fiona Mirylees, whose mother, Betty Mirylees, was left the Nanteos estate and the cup by her cousin Margaret Powell in 1952. The Powells had lived at Nanteos since 1705. Fiona Mirylees sold the house and the estate in 1961 and later moved to Herefordshire. The cup, now normally kept in a bank vault, had recently been lent to a seriously ill woman connected to the Mirylees family, from whose house in Herefordshire it was stolen after she had been admitted to hospital.

In 1977 the cup was displayed at the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth. Specialists from the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Wales examined it and concluded that it was a Germanic mazer (drinking vessel) carved from wych elm and dating from the 14th or 15th centuries. It first gained fame in 1878 when put on display at St David's College, Lampeter, by George Powell (1842-82), the owner of Nanteos House. Powell, according to Guy de Maupassant, "loved the supernatural, the macabre, the tortured, the intricate and every form of derangement". Some scholars have proposed that he had found the mazer during his structural repairs to Strata Florida Abbey in the early 1870s. In subsequent years, although it was kept behind glass at Nanteos, it was regularly filled with water for distribution to the homes of the ill and infirm.


Cwpan Nanteos.
The Healing Cup.
Originally in Strata Florida Abbey.
& believed to be made from the
wood of the Holy Cross.

ABOVE: The now lost Nanteos Cup, one of many putative Holy Grail vessels.

On 6 August, West Mercia Police raided the Crown pub in Lea, Herefordshire, after a tip-off, hoping to find the missing relic. Twelve officers locked all the staff inside while they searched the 15th century pub, but after an hour the only thing they found that vaguely resembled it was a salad bowl. *Nanteos Cup (Wikipedia); Western Mail (Cardiff), 16 July + 7 Aug; D.Mirror, 16 July; Hereford Times, 17 July; D.Telegraph, 7 Aug 2014.*



AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: The Goblet of the Infanta Doña Urraca.

THE GOBLET OF THE INFANTA DOÑA URRACA

Another, much more decorative, Holy Grail candidate made the news last March with the publication of *Los Reyes del Grial* (The Kings of the Grail). In this book, Margarita Torres, lecturer in mediæval history at León University, and art historian José Ortega del Río, claim the vessel – specifically the chalice from which Christ was supposed to have drunk during his Last Supper – is in a church in León, northern Spain. It is part of a relic known as the goblet of the Infanta Doña Urraca, made of agate, gold and onyx. The Infanta was the daughter of Ferdinand I, King of León from 1037 to 1065, who donated the goblet to León's Basilica of Saint Isidore.

Torres said that two mediæval Egyptian parchments they found in 2011 at Cairo's Al-Azhar University had set them on a three-year investigation. Their studies led them to identify the upper part of the princess's goblet, made of agate and missing a fragment (as described in the parchments), as the chalice of Christ. The parchments relate how the Fatimid Caliphate took the chalice from the Christian community in Jerusalem to Cairo. It was then given to an emir in Denia, on Spain's Mediterranean coast, in return for help he gave to Egyptians during a famine in 1054. The emir then gave it as a peace offering to the Christian King Ferdinand I.

An unspecified "scientific dating process" is said to have dated the chalice to between 200 BC and AD 100. Torres and del Río admit that the first centuries of its history remain a mystery and they obviously cannot say whether it ever actually touched Christ's lips, but they insist it is the cup that the early Christians revered as the chalice used at the Last Supper. It thus rivals the popular

Spanish candidate for the Grail kept in Valencia cathedral, which Pope Benedict used to give Mass when he visited the city in 2006. *Irish Times, 28 Mar; [AFP] Guardian, 1 April; Irish Examiner, 3 April 2014.*

JOSEPH OF CARDIFF

Joseph of Arimathea, the man who, according to St Mark's Gospel gave his tomb for the burial of Jesus after his crucifixion – and who, according to legend, brought the Holy Grail to Glastonbury and planted his staff on Wearyall Hill, could be buried at a church near the River Taff in central Cardiff. This startling claim is made by Michael A Clark, 73, from Birmingham, author of *Maelgwn of Llandaff and Joseph of Arimathea* (Covenant Publishing, 2013).

One legend has suggested that Joseph's final resting place after his death in AD 82 was on the Isle of Avalon, and an empty tomb once said to be his grave was moved in 1928 from the ruined Glastonbury Abbey to St John the Baptist Church nearby; Clark, however, asserts Joseph's grave is intact and in the open, lying within the ruins of the Chapel of St Mary in Bute Park, Cardiff. We are told that the site was pinpointed in the sixth century by Maelgwn of Llandaff, the brother of a local ruler, and that Joseph was known in Wales as St Ilid. He allegedly founded a church in Llanilid, just outside Pencoed. Maelgwn's brother was Meurig, after whom Pentre Meurig in the Vale of Glamorgan is named.

"The Bishop of Bethlehem, after the Muslims took over Jerusalem, was promised exile in France and he used to visit here [Cardiff]," said Clark. "Why did he visit here? It was to do with Joseph being buried here… Joseph was like the Carnegie of the ancient world, the great uncle of Christ, trading all the metal of the Roman empire. He was a very powerful man. He was a man that the Romans feared. They used to come here for all the minerals in South Wales, it was on the trade route. It's quite logical this happened you see, it has just been forgotten." *South Wales Echo, 22 July; D.Telegraph, 23 July; Western Daily Press, 24 July 2013.*

CHINESE 'HOLY GRAIL'

A rare Ming Dynasty artefact, a Chenghua Meiyintang 'chicken' cup dated to 1465–87, sold at auction in Sotheby's in Hong Kong last April for a cool £21.2 million. "There's no more legendary object in the history of Chinese porcelain," said Nicholas Chow, Sotheby's deputy chairman for Asia. "This is really the Holy Grail when it comes to Chinese art." The small white vessel, 3.1in (7.9cm) in diameter, is known as a chicken cup because it is decorated with images of a cock and hen tending to their chicks. There are thought to be only 17 such cups extant, but none is in better condition. Four are in private hands, the rest in museums. There are three in Britain, held by the British Museum, the Victoria & Albert and the Fitzwilliam.

The cup was bought by Liu Yiqian, 50, a Shanghai tycoon, breaking the world record for any Chinese porcelain sold at auction. Mr Liu, from a poor family, made his fortune playing the stock market and is said to be worth £550 million. He has amassed one of China's most important art collections. While he was repeatedly swiping his American Express card to pay for the cup, he put it to immediate use. "A Sotheby's staffer poured me some tea," he said. "I saw the [chicken cup] and excitedly poured some of that tea into the cup and drank a little. Such a simple thing, what is so crazy about that? Emperor Qianlong has used it, now I've used it. I just wanted to see how it felt." A photograph of him casually smiling while he drank from the cup horrified many in China. "You think you can drink it and become immortal?" one person wrote on social media site Weibo. "In fact, isn't it just a way to satisfy your vanity?" *D.Telegraph, 9 April + 24 July; D.Mail, 9 April 2014.*

AFP / GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: The 'chicken cup', the Holy Grail of Chinese porcelain.

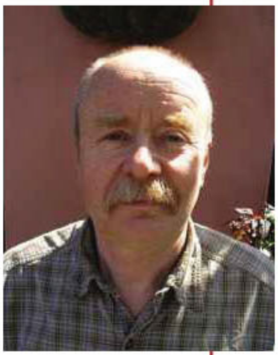
KONSPIRACY KORNER

ROBIN RAMSAY, EDITOR OF LOBSTER, FILES HIS FINAL REPORT FROM THE CONSPIRASPHERE...

Some months ago, I was invited to appear on the BBC's *Daily Politics* show "to defend conspiracy theories", according to the researcher who rang me. Jeez, I thought, is that how this column is perceived? Even though I enjoy doing television (and it's easy money), I declined the offer. Basically, I was being asked to be a foil for the dreadful David Aaronovitch. No thanks.

I don't think I have been "defending conspiracy theories", but perhaps all the researcher saw was a column with 'conspiracy' in the title (as far as I know, the only such column in a hardcopy publication in the English-speaking world).

As I began writing this, we were in the early days after the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 and the usual conspiracy theory suspects were being rounded up: the Illuminati, the Israelis, the CIA.[1] Even President Obama featured in one delirious 'theory' by the American shock-jock of the right, Rush Limbaugh, who wondered if it hadn't been done to distract America from the problem of immigration.[2]



Actually, most of these barely deserve the description 'theory'. They are merely assertions with no accompanying evidence and a reminder that among cyberspace's most active residents are people incapable of rational thought. But I expect they will be seized upon as examples of loony 'conspiracy theories' by the academics at Cambridge University's Conspiracy and Democracy project, who believe that the rise of conspiracy theories in the 1980s is undermining democracy by reducing trust in our political leaders.[3] Even if democracy requires that we trust our leaders (arguably, it requires that we don't), on this they are simply wrong. In America, the decline in popular trust of political leaders began in the 1960s with the clumsy cover-up of the Kennedy assassination. In the UK, that decline began in the mid 1970s; and though there appears to be no data on the causes, the social turmoil of that decade seems a likely candidate. (I would also guess that trust in our political leaders declined in the 1990s as they increasingly used spin doctors and focus groups, trying to say as little as possible of substance lest they offend some target sector of the electorate.)

Little attention was paid to conspiracy theories in the English-speaking world until the mid-1990s and the TV programme *The X-Files*. Before Mulder and Scully hit our screens, the only significant use of 'conspiracy theory' had been as a label to scare mainstream journalists and historians away from things our politicians and state officials didn't want investigated – a strategy initiated by the CIA in 1967 to deal with the critics of the Kennedy assassination cover-up.[4]

But I've said all this before in this column, haven't I? And when a columnist becomes repetitive, it's time to leave the stage. Which I do here.

FT noticed in 1996 (the *X-Files* effect) that there was something going on with conspiracy theories, and my relationship with this journal began when I spoke on the subject at the UnConvention that year. But I had always been a *Fortean Times* fellow-traveller with my John Michell books not too far from the my JFK books, and the column didn't seem that big a stretch.

Meanwhile, I continue to publish *Lobster* (www.lobster-magazine.co.uk) and you will continue to find me, and some of the themes I have pursued in this column, there.

---

1 Some of these are described at http://tinyurl.com/phjg6my

2 Discussed at http://tinyurl.com/mharx3r

3 www.conspiracyanddemocracy.org/

4 See http://tinyurl.com/ktts3fe

A PLAGUE ON US

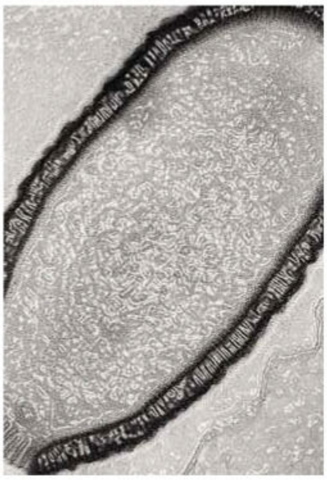
While the dreaded Ebola threatens to cut a swathe through the population, we survey the risk from more traditional scourges

● A Stone Age virus found frozen deep in the Siberian permafrost has come back to life and become infectious once again after lying dormant for about 32,000 years. French scientists say the contagion poses no danger to humans or animals, but other viruses could be unleashed as the ground becomes exposed. Their study is published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (PNAS).

The ancient pathogen, called *Pithovirus sibericum*, was found 100ft (30m) down in Chukotka, near the East Siberian Sea. It belongs to the Megaviridæ, a class of viruses discovered 10 years ago, large enough to be seen under a conventional microscope. This one, measuring 1.5 micrometres in length, is the biggest ever found. Tests show that it attacks amoebas (simple single-celled organisms), but does not infect humans or other animals.

Since the 1970s, the permafrost has retreated and reduced in thickness, and climate change projections suggest it will decrease further. It has also become more accessible, and is being eyed for its natural resources. Professor Jean-Michel Claverie from the University of Aix-Marseille warns that ancient strains of the smallpox virus, which was declared eradicated 30 years ago, could pose a risk. “If it is true that these viruses survive in the same way those amœba viruses survive, then smallpox is not eradicated from the planet – only the surface,” he said. “By going deeper we may reactivate the possibility that smallpox could become again a disease of humans in modern times. It is a recipe for disaster.” In the past century alone, some 300 million people were killed by smallpox.

Professor Jonathan Ball, a virologist from the University of Nottingham, offered a note of scepticism: “Finding a virus still capable of infecting its host after such a long time is still pretty astounding – but just how long other viruses could remain viable in permafrost is anyone’s guess. It will depend a lot on the actual virus. I doubt they are all as robust as this one… even if they did survive, they would need to find a host to infect and they would need to find them pretty fast.” *BBC News, 4 Mar; D.Telegraph, 5 Mar; D.Mail, 5+13 Mar; Economist, 8 Mar 2014.*



A Stone Age virus was found in the Siberian permafrost

● Permafrost is not the only environment from which smallpox could return to plague us. A government scientist clearing an old storage room at a research centre near Washington came upon decades-old vials of smallpox packed away and forgotten in a cardboard box. The six glass vials of freeze-dried virus were intact and sealed with melted glass, and the virus may well be dead, because it had not been kept cold over the years. Nevertheless, the discovery was disturbing – world health authorities had believed the only samples left were safely stored in secure laboratories in Atlanta, Georgia, and Novosibirsk, Russia. The unrecorded samples were found in a building at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Maryland, used by the Food and Drug Administration since 1972. Thankfully, no smallpox contamination was found in the building. The samples, which may have been stored there since the 1950s, were transported to Atlanta on 7 July. *BBC News, 8 July; D.Telegraph, 9 July 2014.*

● In March 2013, engineers working on the Crossrail project in London unearthed 25 skeletons from a plague pit under Charterhouse Square in Farringdon, buried in neat rows on two levels sealed under clay. Archæologists established the victims were buried during three waves of plague that struck the capital in 1348-49, 1361 and 1433-35. Teeth from four of the skeletons tested positive for *Yersinia pestis*, the bacterium responsible for both the bubonic and pneumonic plague. After analysing the teeth, scientists believe that the

CROSSRAIL

TOP: *Pithovirus sibericum*. **ABOVE:** Skeletons unearthed from a Charterhouse plague pit during the construction of Crossrail.

bubonic plague – spread by the bites of infected fleas living on black rats – had mutated into the more virulent pneumonic form that infected the lungs and could be transmitted simply by coughing. This could account for the devastating mortality rate of the Black Death. The theory is supported by separate research showing relatively few rat bones from the period and that the disease took hold in December when rats are at their least active. The pneumatic form didn't lead to agonising boils or buboes, but was more lethal. "There was no chance of recovery," said Don Walker of the Museum of London. "You could argue victims died quicker and in less pain." *Sunday Telegraph, 30 Mar; D.Mail, Metro, 31 Mar 2014.*

- The plague of Justinian is estimated to have killed between 30 million and 50 million people – almost half the world's population – as it spread across Asia, North Africa, the Middle East and Europe in AD 541-543. Scientists, who recently isolated traces of bacterial DNA from the teeth of two victims of this plague buried in Bavaria, found that it was caused by a strain of *Yersinia pestis* distinct from that responsible for the 14th century Black Death. While the Justinian strain died out, the 14th century strain gave rise to the Third Plague pandemic, which began in Hong Kong in about 1850 and went on to kill about 12 million people in China and India alone. There are still rodent reservoirs of this strain, which continues to claim hundreds of human victims every year (particularly in Madagascar) even though it is curable with antibiotics if caught early enough. However, the Bavarian discovery suggests that a new deadly strain of plague could strike again at any time, heralding a new pandemic. The first known epidemics – such as the Plague of Athens (c. 430 BC) and the Antonine Plague (c. AD 165) – could also have been independent emergences of particularly virulent *Yersinia pestis* strains. *livescience.com, 17 Jan; Lancet Infectious Diseases, 27 Jan; BBC News, Independent, D.Telegraph, 28 Jan; The Week, 1 Feb 2014.*

- Last December, 20 villagers near the town of Mandritsara in northwest Madagascar died of bubonic plague. The deaths were doubly disturbing, because they occurred outside the island's normal plague season (July to October) and at a far lower elevation than usual, suggesting it might be spreading. In 2012, about 60 people died of plague in Madagascar, the highest number globally. The disease first appeared in the country in 1898. *Irish Times, 12 Dec; D.Mirror, 21 Dec 2013.*

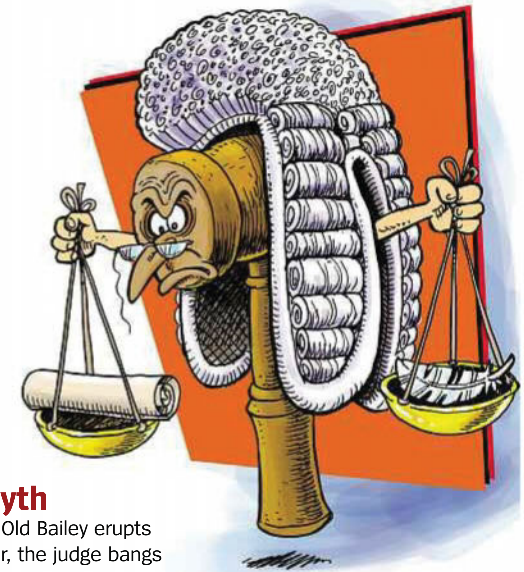
- This summer, 30,000 people in the old town of Yumen city in Gansu province were quarantined off from the rest of China for more than a week after a 38-year-old farmer named Wang, living in a nearby village, died from bubonic plague. He had become infected on 13 July after chopping up a dead marmot (a small rodent) to feed to his dog. He suffered a fever and was admitted to hospital in Yumen, but died on 16 July. The population of greater Yumen is about 180,000. All movement between the urban centre and the wider suburbs was banned, with police manning 10 checkpoints. No one inside the city is believed to have contracted the plague, though 151 people who might have come into contact with the man were placed under observation. *Independent, 23 July 2014.*

- Around the same time in Colorado, four people were diagnosed with bubonic plague; all were treated in hospital and quickly released. About 1,000 confirmed or probable cases of bubonic plague occurred in the US between 1900 and 2010, most of them in the arid southwest. A plague-infected squirrel was trapped in Angeles National Forest in southern California on 16 July 2013, leading to parts of the park being shut down. The last urban plague epidemic to strike the US occurred in southern California in 1924-25. *Irish Times, 27 July 2013; Guardian, 25 July 2014.*

Mythconceptions

by Mat Coward

180: THE JUDGE'S GAVEL



HUNT EMERSON

The myth

When the Old Bailey erupts into uproar, the judge bangs frantically on his desk with a wooden hammer, called a gavel. "Order, order!" he cries, gavelling away like a good 'un, until the inevitable moment when the accused's step-granny at the back yells "I'll have a pint of mild!"

The "truth"

No judge of any kind in any court anywhere in England and Wales has ever used a gavel. Not in real life, that is: in fiction (especially in TV dramas) judges are rarely seen without their little mahogany mallets, with which they demand attention, reprimand disobedient lawyers, and underline the finality of judicial decisions. Even in newspaper reports, the gavel is often employed emblematically, along the lines of "Judge Smith to hang up his gavel after 90 years on the bench". What's confusing the journalists and telly prop-buyers is, presumably, exposure to generations of courtroom dramas from the USA, where gavels are indeed widespread. But in Britain, if you use a gavel to make a point, you're either an auctioneer or a toastmaster.

Sources

www.theguardian.com/uk/2009/nov/23/writ-large-courtroom-drama-bbc; www.judiciary.gov.uk/about-the-judiciary/the-justice-system/court-traditions/

Disclaimer

Legally informed readers are welcome to appeal this matter, via the letters page; are gavels, after all, to be found in any era, area, or type of court in this country? And does the "no gavels" rule apply only to England and Wales, or is it general to the UK?

Mythchaser

An eon ago, in **FT124:25**, this column discussed the "Popeye myth", explaining how a carelessly misplaced decimal point in a 19th century research paper had led to the belief that spinach is the richest source of dietary iron. This has become one of the most celebrated mistakes in science – but it now seems that it never occurred (see for instance www.abc.net.au/science/articles/2011/12/06/3384516.htm). This fascinating, though far from rare, example of how myth debunkings sometimes launch new myths is a good reminder of why *Mythconceptions* never claims to tell the truth, but merely the "truth".

DON'T MISS MYTHCONCEPTIONS THE BOOK
OUT NOW ONLINE AND IN ALL GOOD BOOKSHOPS

NECROLOG

This month, we bid farewell to a counterculture guru, entrepreneurial communard and social activist, and to the pagan priestess who created unicorns and practised polyamory

PRESS ASSOCIATION IMAGES / AP

STEPHEN GASKIN

Born in Denver, Stephen Gaskin had a peripatetic upbringing across the south-western US; his father was variously a cowboy, builder, mail clerk and commercial fisherman. Lying about his age, Stephen joined the Marines at 17 and saw combat in Korea. He dropped out of junior college, drank heavily and ran coffee houses. At San Francisco State University he became a teaching assistant to S I Hayakawa, the celebrated linguist and semanticist. By the mid-1960s he was an instructor at the university, giving courses on English, semantics, creative writing – and fringe subjects such as witchcraft. After the literature department declined to renew his contract, he began his experimental "Monday Night Class" – an open discussion group involving up to 1,500 students and held in 1969 and 1970 in "The Family Dog", a huge auditorium in the city's Outer Richmond neighbourhood. His classes ranged from "Group Experiments in Unified Field Theory" to "Magic, Einstein, and God", along with a cornucopia of spiritual exotica, including paranormal experiences. He sat cross-legged on a stage and advocated getting high – with or without drugs. He said his skill was an ability to talk intelligently while stoned longer than most people. He became known as San Francisco's acid guru.

When liberal Christian ministers attending a conference in San Francisco heard him, they invited him to visit churches around the US to bring his message – minus the drugs – to alienated young people in their home towns. He agreed, and when followers asked if they could accompany him, he said yes, provided they brought their own wheels and paid their own way. On 10 October 1970, Gaskin led a caravan of 25 colourfully painted school buses and other vehicles on a tour of 42 states. Fifty more vehicles and 150 more people, including several babies born along the way, joined the tour.

After returning to San Francisco, the group was unsure what to do next. As the story goes, someone at a meeting blurted out "Let's go to Tennessee" – where people had been nice to them – "and get a farm." Another caravan with about 300 people hit the road. Not long after arriving in Tennessee, the group bought a 1,014-acre (410-ha) farm south of Nashville for $70 an acre and began setting up tents.

To his followers, Gaskin ultimately offered more than spiritual guidance. In founding the Farm, they said, he gave togetherness coupled with individual expression that had energised the counterculture. Communities like the Farm have their antecedents throughout American history. In the 1960s and 1970s, hundreds of thousands of people joined them, though most of the communities didn't last long. But the Farm, which grew to 1,500 members at its peak in 1979 and has about 200 today, has outlived almost all of them and exemplifies an effective self-sufficient subculture. It now includes a retirement community.

The Farm's core values included the importance of hard work and respect for the Tennessee locals. "You can't jive anybody who's teaching you how to run a tractor," said Gaskin. There were no rules; however, there were unwritten "agreements" that often began with a nod to their source: "Stephen says…" No guns. All for one, one for all; love thy neighbour; and meditate frequently. At Sunday gatherings, Gaskin sermonised about the well-lived life, presided over burials and performed marriages. Unions of two or three couples were not unheard of, and Gaskin was for a time involved in a marriage of six.

Timothy Miller, a religious studies professor at the University of Kansas who has studied communes, said that the Farm was "the archetypal hippie commune" in its commitment to higher consciousness, self-sufficiency, a clean environment and a "flamboyant hippie style". However, where it departed from most of its counterparts was in embracing an entrepreneurial spirit: it created a book-publishing business, marketed pickles and sorghum syrup under the Old Beatnik label, and dealt in hand-held Geiger counters to measure radiation leaks at nuclear power plants. It also spurned insularity for outreach. 'Farmies', as they called themselves, built 1,200 quake-resistant houses for the victims of the 1976 quake in Guatemala, set up volunteer ambulance services in the South Bronx and on an Indian reservation in upstate New York, and started a school lunch programme in Belize and an agricultural training programme in Liberia. They were among the earliest volunteers to arrive in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

Gaskin and his fourth wife, the former Ina May Middleton, developed a free midwifery service for women, communard or not. Ina Gaskin became a widely known advocate for births outside hospitals and has written popular books on the subject, such as *Spiritual Midwifery* (1977). Stephen Gaskin was the author of over a dozen books, including *The Caravan* (1971); *Hey Beatnik! This is the Farm Book* (1974); *Amazing Dope Tales and Haight Ashbury Flashbacks* (1980); *Cannabis Spirituality: Including 13 Guidelines for Sanity and Safety* (1996); and *Outlaw in My Heart: A Political Activist's User's Manual* (2000). In 2000 Gaskin ran an unsuccessful campaign to become presidential nominee for the Green Party, with a mission to introduce universal health care, reform financial institutions and legalise cannabis. "Did you inhale?" he was asked on the campaign trail. "I didn't exhale," he replied.

Stephen Gaskin, commune founder, born Denver, Colorado 16 Feb 1935; died Summertown, Tennessee 1 July 2014, aged 79.

MORNING GLORY ZELL-RAVENHEART

was born Diana Moore in California, an only child to parents of Irish and Choctow Indian ancestry. Inspired by Sybil Leek's *Diary of a Witch* (1968), she rejected Christianity, began practising witchcraft, and changed her name to Morning Glory. Travelling with her pet boa constrictor to join a commune in Eugene, Oregon, in 1969, she met a hitchhiker named Gary Ferns. They married and had a daughter named Rainbow. At a Gnostic Aquarian Festival in Minneapolis in 1973, Morning Glory met Tim Zell, 30, a keynote speaker on "Theagenesis". The following year she left Gary and married Tim in a pagan "handfasting" ceremony performed by Archdruid Isaac Bonewitz and

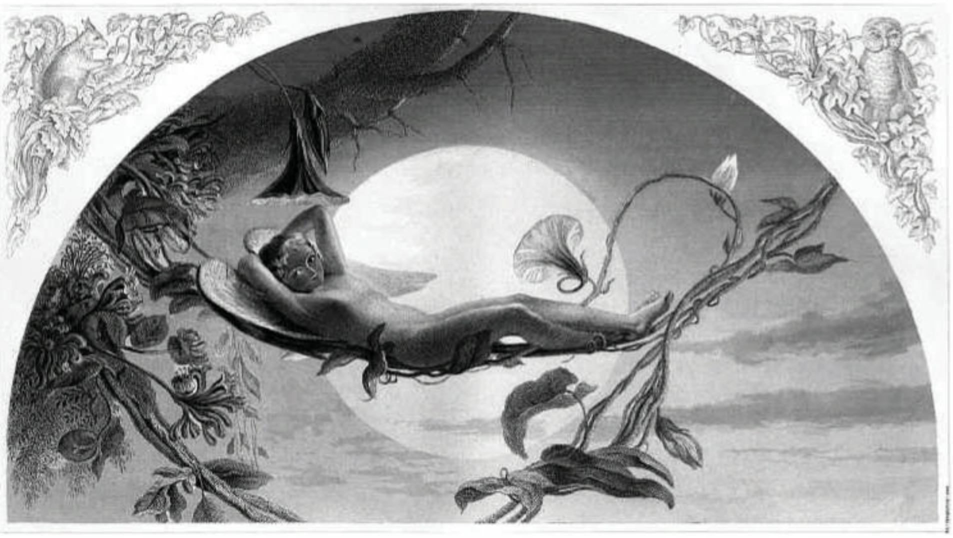
High Priestess Carolyn Clark. Tim Zell changed his name to Otter in 1979 and to Oberon in 1994.

The Zells (they added "Ravenheart" later on) lived first in St Louis, Missouri, where they helped produce and edit the neopagan magazine *Green Egg*. She was ordained a priestess in the Church of All Worlds, which her husband had founded in 1962. They founded the Ecosophical Research Association in 1977 at Coeden Brith – a ranch in Mendoceno County, northern California – to investigate arcane lore and legends of cryptids such as Bigfoot and mermaids. They spent much of their early life together on the move, travelling about in the "Scarlet Succubus" (a converted school bus) before settling in a hippie commune at Coeden Brith from 1985 to 1993. Here, they raised "unicorns" by carrying out minor surgery on the horn buds of goats – a procedure they attempted to patent.

The marriage was open and they soon began to share lovers and friends, from 1997 all taking the "family" name Zell-Ravenheart. Morning Glory celebrated their lifestyle in an article in *Green Egg* (May 1990) entitled *A Bouquet of Lovers.* The article is widely cited as the original source of the word polyamory (now enshrined the *Oxford English Dictionary*), although the word does not appear in the article – the hyphenated form "poly-amorous" does instead.

Morning Glory created new ceremonies for the Church of All Worlds, ranging from baby blessings to elaborate rites such as those held to mark the total solar eclipse at a faux Stonehenge in Washington State in 1979. She was also a published poet and short story writer. With Oberon she co-authored *Creating Circles & Ceremonies* (2006). In 1999 the Zell-Ravenherts moved to Sonoma County, California, where Oberon founded the Grey School of Wizardry. Here, novices, split into four houses – Winds, Undines, Gnomes and Salamander – can learn such skills as alchemy, horse whispering, wand-making, spell-casting and advances "mathemagics". Oberon survives his wife.

Diana Moore (aka Morning Glory Zell-Ravenheart), witch and polyamory advocate, born Long Beach, California 27 May 1948; died (from multiple myeloma) Cotali, California 13 May 2014, aged 65.



FAIRIES, FOLKLORE AND FORTEANA

SIMON YOUNG FILES A NEW REPORT FROM THE INTERFACE OF STRANGE PHENOMENA AND FOLK BELIEF

WINGING IT

Let's pretend. An English 10-year-old sees a fairy, in 1700, in his family garden; and his distant descendant, another 10-year-old, though this time a girl, sees a fairy in the same garden in 2000: what, if anything, will be different in the descriptions that the excited children give their parents?

Well, the two fairies will, to judge by contemporary descriptions, look *and* act differently. Expect, for example, more spite from the 1700 fairy than from the 2000 counterpart. But the most fundamental change will be in appearance – more particularly, wings. The fairy from 1700 will not have wings. Indeed, the little boy living in William III's England would be shocked at the idea of flapping fairies: wings, he would point out, were the prerogative of bats, birds and angels. In 2000, however, the little girl's fairy will very probably, though not inevitably, be winged. Indeed, trace the major collections of 20th-century fairy sightings (Evans-Wentz, *Coming of the Fairies*, the *John O'London* Letters and Marjorie Johnson's canon) and you will see wings becoming more and more common as the century progresses. Where do they come from? The answer seems to be from art. In the very late 18th century fairies began (gradually) to be pictured with wings, almost certainly because of the influence of *putti*, those ghastly cherub statues that pollute Italian Renaissance gardens. And by the later 19th century it became increasingly common for artists to include butterfly-style wings on their fey creations: it is enough to think here of the work of Grimshaw and Dadd, though there are many, many other examples. These wings, from art, then start to infiltrate children's literature. The date for this is more difficult but there are some examples from the mid-19th century: and, by 1911 and the novel of *Peter Pan*, Tinker Bell's wings are taken as a given. It is at this point, in the Edwardian period, that wings emerge into life – that is into fairy sightings – crucially at Cottingley. I don't, in fact, know of a single fairy sighting recorded in the 19th century with wings (though I look forward to being corrected).

"I DON'T, IN FACT, KNOW OF A SINGLE FAIRY SIGHTING RECORDED IN THE 19TH CENTURY WITH WINGS"

Of course, fairies have always been creatures of the air ("where the bee sucks, there suck I") and they are often portrayed moving through the skies; or, in some cases, moving in a second from one place to another. But wings had not been part of their traditional apparatus.

Is the arrival of wings the proof that fairies are all 'in the head'? Or does our imagination apply filters to 'entities', as Hilary Evans long ago suggested, clothing them in our own ideals? In either case, the parallel with evolving sky sightings from mediæval heaven ships, to late Victorian terror dirigibles, to post-war saucers is striking. Though note that in the case of UFOs there is no lag between technology and vision: in the case of fairies we have to wait about a century for the new thing – wings – to flutter down into witness accounts.

Simon Young writes on folklore and history and runs www.fairyist.com

the UFO files

FORTEAN TIMES presents our monthly section featuring regular sighting reports, reviews of classic cases, entries on major ufological topics and hands-on advice for UFO investigators. **The UFO Files** will benefit from your input, so don't hesitate to submit your suggestions and questions.

To contact **The UFO Files**, email: **nufon@btinternet.com**

FLYINGSAUCERY

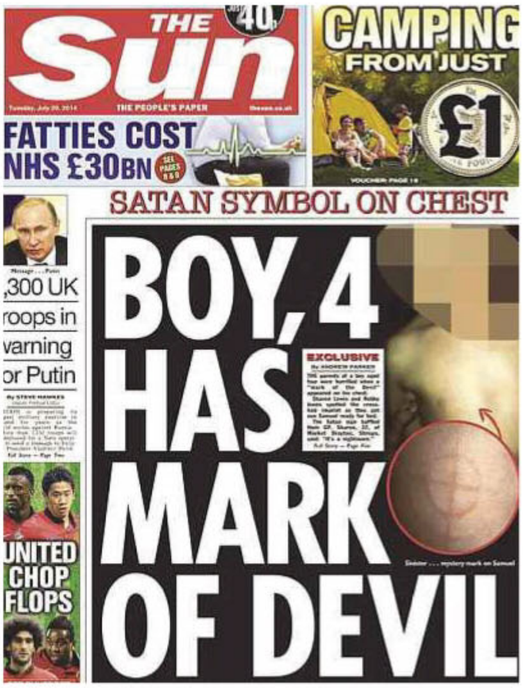
ANDY ROBERTS & DR DAVID CLARKE PRESENT THEIR REGULAR SURVEY OF THE LATEST FADS AND FLAPS FROM THE WORLD OF UFOLOGY

THE MARK OF THE DEVIL?

In past 'silly seasons', the *Sun* newspaper has sold us ludicrous stories about 'alien invasion fleets' and great white sharks that lurk off the Cornish coast (for a round-up see **FT239:30**). But this summer the 'fun-loving' tabloid may have come unstuck. A story that claimed a four-year-old boy from Market Drayton, Shropshire, had the 'mark of the Devil' on his chest led to a storm of protest and complaints to the media regulator. The child's mother, Sharon Lewis, 37, said she found the mark – two concentric circles with a cross through the middle – on her son's chest on 23 May. Sharon took him to the family doctor, who, she said, "hadn't a clue what it was". The mark disappeared three weeks later. Seeking an explanation, Sharon turned to social media and the *Sun* readers for answers. In a page one 'exclusive' published on 29 July, the tabloid claimed the mark resembled the "the sign of the Devil's first born" and linked it with the symbol of Mammon, "one of the Seven Princes of Hell". It said similar occult symbols appeared in Egyptian tomb paintings and cave paintings in Italy dating back to 1500 BC, "apparently depicting visits by beings from outer space".

By now, the family were understandably "confused and frightened" and Sharon could not look at the mark without "thinking something unnatural had visited my boy". Comments on social media were less than sympathetic. Many commentators said the mark resembled the type of burn that would occur if the cross-hairs of a household hair-dryer were pressed against the skin. Conservative MP Sarah Wollaston described the story as "the most irresponsible piece of journalism" she had seen for some time. She demanded to know what justification there was for naming the child or "saying [he] was marked by the Devil". Afterwards more than 8,000 members of the public signed a petition that call upon the Press Complaints Commission to take action against the paper for starting what some believed was a modern day 'witch hunt'. In its defence, the tabloid told the *Guardian* it had "not encouraged the parents to embellish or expand the story". As social services were not involved, it "sought to treat in a lighthearted fashion, highlighting the fanciful link to the occult". It went on to justify the story as being newsworthy because: "An unusual mark appears, the mother gets it checked out by a doctor who confirms there is no medical reason why it should be there..."

But we know Budd Hopkins used a similar methodology to identify a range of anomalous marks on the body as signposts for the alien abduction syndrome. Witchfinder Matthew Hopkins also searched for marks on the bodies of his victims to prove the Devil was active in 17th century East Anglia. Today, aliens rival devils as the bogeymen responsible for a range of unusual happenings. If nothing else the *Sun's* story highlighted how often these beliefs and lore surface on social media. The tenuous link with aliens led Sharon to contact a US website for people who believe they are victims of alien abduction. "One question was: 'Have you seen objects in the sky you cannot identify?'", she said. In a follow-up story, the *Sun* told how psychic gran Gillian Howlett, 46, from Drayton, Norfolk, had been plagued by similar marks on her left arm since the Winter Solstice in 2012. A second appeared on the same arm last December and a third on her bum this Easter. But she did not seem unduly worried about attention from devils or aliens: "I think I must be a bit special," she said. "I feel safe and think someone's looking after me."
Sun, 29+30 July; Guardian, 30 July 2014.



THE Sun

40p

Tuesday, July 29, 2014

THE PEOPLE'S PAPER

thesun.co.uk

CAMPING FROM JUST £1

FATTIES COST NHS £30BN

SEE PAGES 8 & 9

SATAN SYMBOL ON CHEST

BOY, 4 HAS MARK OF DEVIL

EXCLUSIVE

,300 UK
roops in
varning
or Putin

UNITED CHOP FLOPS

CHILEAN GOVERNMENT GOES FORTEAN OVER UFOs (OR IS THAT UAPs?)

Most governments have washed their hands of the UFO mystery and few, apart from the French, have official bodies tasked with the collection and analysis of reports. So it's a breath of fresh air to see the Chilean government taking what is essentially a fortean view of the mystery.

A recent meeting of Chile's Civil Aviation Department posed the question whether UFOs were a threat to civilian or military air traffic. The fact they used the British MoD term UAP (unidentified aerial phenomena) was a good start. The CEFAA (Committee for the Studies of Anomalous Aerial Phenomena), Chile's official governmental UFO investigation body, invited experts from a wide range of disciplines to a meeting on 31 July at which the question of aerial safety regarding UFOs was discussed. Among those present were scientists, astronomers, psychologists, meteorologists, representatives from the armed forces and physicists. All seemed to accept the premise that UFOs, whatever they are, exist and are worthy of investigation.

One military official said that because many witnesses believed UAP demonstrated "intelligent behaviour" it was the government's duty to look for "the intention behind" that intelligence. But the meeting's conclusion was much the same as the British Condign report that, whatever they are, "UAP do not present a threat or a danger to air operations, either civilian or military..." and "although there have been a small number of accidents attributed to UAP around the world, none has withstood an objective examination that presented unmistakable proof that UAP were the cause." It seems that the CEFAA have a genuine interest in what they and the Chilean public believe is a genuine, unexplained, scientific mystery. "For Chileans, this is completely normal and we don't consider it news at all," Jose Lay, international affairs director for the CEFAA, said afterwards.
Huffington Post, 12 Aug 2014; http://www.huffingtonpost.com/leslie-kean/chile-declares-ufos-pose-_b_5670136.html

UFO CASEBOOK

JENNY RANDLES HAD A RECENT CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH A DRAMATIC HOAX... WHICH GOT HER THINKING

HOAXING SAUCERS

Being caught up in a drama that made news around the world made my choice of topic this month simple. Why do people go to such great lengths to fabricate events and create hoaxes? If we can understand this process it might help us to detect, and weed out, such episodes more readily, leaving us to focus on unsolved UFO reports.

At lunchtime on 4 August 2014 I had been in Stockport when the bus home was brought to a rapid halt by a roaring noise that rocked the vehicle. The noise was coming from the sky above. Directly above us, as I stared upward, was a large jet aircraft passing slowly at about 1,000ft under which you could clearly read the name 'QATAR'. It wasn't this plane causing the din, but an RAF Typhoon jet sweeping low and fast around the Airbus 330 over our heads. Moments later it returned, having broken off from its close inspection of the passenger plane before streaking upward.

After regaining his composure, our driver continued on his way; but I knew immediately something was wrong. RAF jets do not fly low across the approach to the UK's third busiest airport. I immediately turned on news channels, only to find that I knew more than they did.

Living as we do right on final approach, we see many aircraft, and I knew that the Qatar Airways flight came in every day from Doha just after 1pm – so I was shouting out facts at the TV screen. I saw that the airport was on lockdown and learned the RAF plane came from an East Anglian base to shadow the Qatar flight after a passenger handed over a note saying he had a bomb. In these security-conscious days and in the wake of other recent tragedies it was reassuring that such swift action had occurred.

With the airbus now parked in a safe zone a few miles line of sight of our garden, I took precautions to cover the French windows in case of shock waves while armed police searched the jet for possible explosives. Happily, they found nothing and eventually a 47-year-old man was escorted from the flight and sectioned, standing accused of engaging in a hoax for reasons as yet undetermined.

UFO hoaxes, of course, rarely create this level of drama or mass disruption. But they do happen. The question is why?

Hoaxing in our field is thankfully rare: less than one per cent of all sightings, so far less common than genuine mistaken identity, Identified Flying Objects or seemingly real UFOs. Yet over the years I have faced many examples that have had a wide array of causes.

Of course, there are witnesses who invent things for reasons connected with their mental health, but it is not the role of a UFO investigator to judge such matters. If you are familiar with UFO history, these cases stand out because they do not match patterns of data but are often personal and colourful in their descriptions. They might feature multiple alien races with highly imaginative appearances and closely involve the witness in some direct way (such as being a disciple or assistant in some intergalactic mission). If a case seems more like an episode of *Doctor Who* than other past CE3 or CE4 encounters then we should think carefully about it.

LEFT: The Qatar Airways passenger jet at Manchester Airport.

GETTY IMAGES

Other reasons for hoaxing a UFO sighting are harder to deal with. One of those that caused some chaos turned out to be a good-spirited hoax masterminded by Richard Branson, the then young entrepreneur. In 1989, he had constructed a balloon that looked like a classic flying saucer 'piloted' by a midget in an alien silver suit. The plan was to land it on 1 April in central London as an April Fool's prank. Sadly, the weather intervened, blew the craft off course, and it came down early in a field near a busy road. The police responded to calls from a worried public convinced they were witnessing a space invasion, only for the officers assigned to make first contact left facing a stuntman. The cops edged away backwards; one confessed later that he'd never been so frightened in his career.

Today, ironically, one of Sir Richard's own Virgin Atlantic Airbus 330s carries the registration G-V UFO as it plies the Atlantic routes between Heathrow and the US. One wonders how many misperceptions this appropriately lettered jet has triggered.

Hoaxing has more than doubled in recent years because photography is now so widespread via mobiles and cheap digital equipment. Fooling the world with a UFO picture has always been the most popular type of hoax and has now become a craze. From the days when ashtrays were tied to washing lines and filmed it is now possible to engineer very convincing hoaxes in HD video.

Sites like You Tube are full of these creations as people seek to outdo the last persuasive bit of trickery with something more amazing. Fame and notoriety, plus watching how others respond to your skills via social networking, seem far more important than using these methods to make money.

Many well-known UFO cases could fall into these categories, as witnessed by recent discussions in these pages over the 'Cumberland Spaceman' and whether this was a hoax carried out on the witness by a friend – a joke that got out of hand when the police became involved – or if the witness himself faked it, given his past history of trick photography.

There are also deeper layers to many cases that we may never unravel. The long debated 'Ilkley Alien' case from Yorkshire in 1987 (see **FT230:30-31**) remains contentious 27 years later, with opinion split even amongst its investigators about if, or how, it was faked. And I know of one UFO photograph showing a most impressive saucer shape that I suspect – but cannot prove – was a hoax by someone seeking to misguidedly support and vindicate an initial report. Unfortunately, it is often impossible to publish details of mere suspicions like these.

Remarkably, a lot of these UFO-related hoax themes came together through synchronicity as a fitting conclusion to the Qatar Airways bomb hoax over the Cheshire skies.

On 7 July 2010 at about 8.40pm, an aircraft inbound to Hangzhou airport on the Yanghtze River Delta in China reported seeing a UFO. Others on the ground saw it, too, as a curved vapour trail led by a golden blob. The airport reacted, as Manchester did four years later, by taking no chances. All operations were closed and incoming flights diverted. Again, as at Manchester, only after the UFO had disappeared and the authorities were sure it was safe did the airport reopen.

Very quickly the Internet was awash with photos and video purporting to show the Hangzhou UFO. Analysis revealed that these were of two kinds. Many were shots of other things – helicopters or rocket launches – often taken thousands of miles away and posted by hoaxers who were jumping on the bandwagon of this highly-promoted case. Other photos were local to the area but came from witnesses who were scouring the skies after the sighting ended and as a result filmed landing lights from incoming jets.

The truth about what brought Hangzhou to a standstill remains unclear, but the most probable answer is that it was a covert Chinese missile launch that, being military in nature, was never made public. Government assurances are, needless to say, now the source of new conspiracy theories about a further type of hoax – one to hide *real* UFOs by the powers that be.

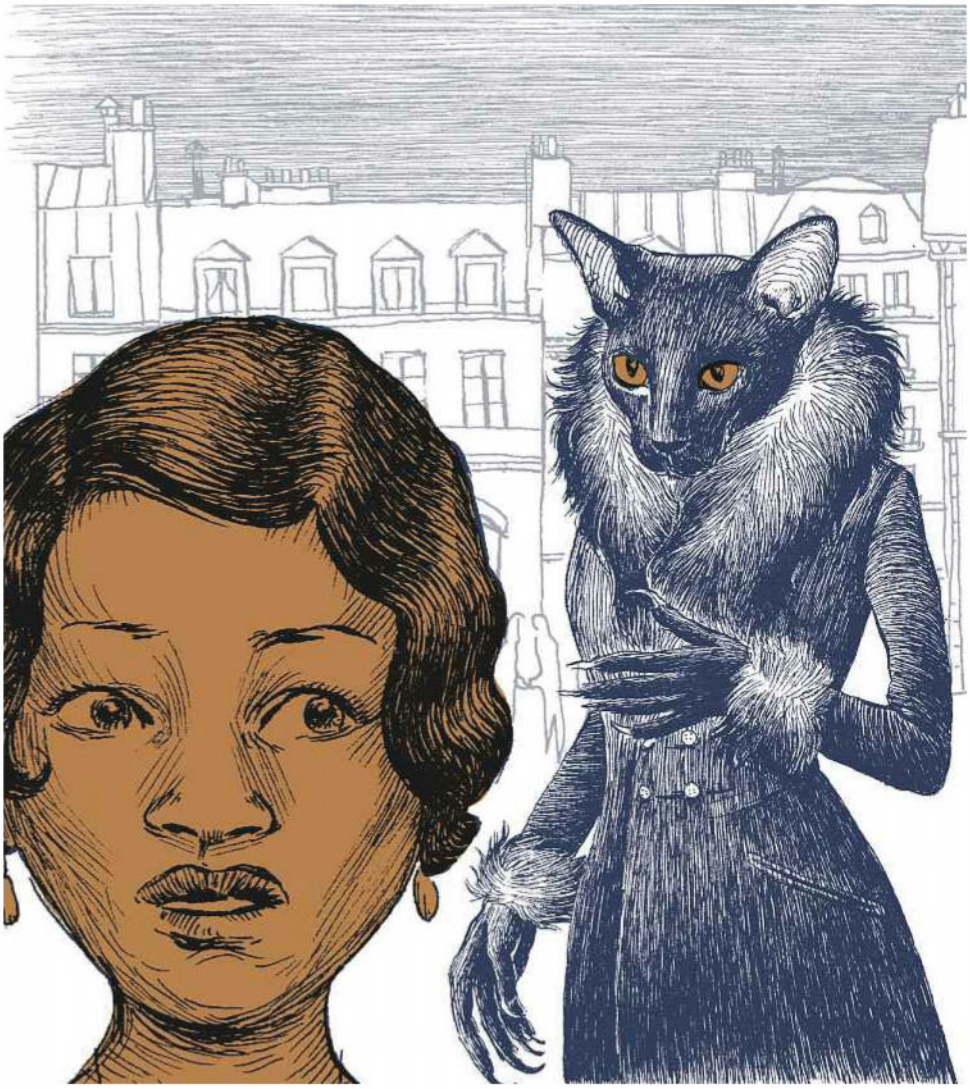
Back in Manchester Airport, life returned to normal after frightened passengers were released from the aircraft. Meanwhile the ill-fated Qatar Airbus (Echo Hotel) returned safely to its Doha base, and its very next flight on 6 August 2014 was heavily delayed. That flight did eventually leave, going to... where else but Hangzhou?

BLASTS FROM THE PAST

FORTEAN TIMES BRINGS YOU THE NEWS THAT TIME FORGOT

53 THE CAT-FACED WOMAN OF EAST FLORENCE

THEO PAIJMANS on reports of a human-feline hybrid terrorising the black population of a Carolina town


CAPUCINE DESLOUIS

A nightmarish woman with a cat's head, eyes and fangs and dressed in a long black coat began prowling the night-time streets of a 1930s South Carolina town. She stalked and attacked its citizens, entered their homes and one night even caused a blackout in a portion of town. Caught by the police, she shape-shifted into a slithering mass of rattlesnakes to escape. These were the stories told during her reign of terror. The cat-faced woman of Florence held sway for a brief period in late January and early February 1939. The entity, it seems, primarily targeted the town's African-American community, and the racial prejudice of the period is obvious in the language and tone of the newspaper reportage.

"Stark Terror held sway among the negro population of East Florence last night as reports increased of the presence of a mysterious 'cat-faced woman' prowling nightly among the dark streets and alleys of the city", the *Florence Morning News* blurted on its front page for 31 January 1939.

The newspaper noted how the homes of the black populace in the eastern section of Florence were barred after nightfall and children were ordered not to venture out of their houses, lest they become a victim of the cat-faced woman. While only a few people actually reported having seen the monster, the terror it caused was such that practically everyone was taking precautions against becoming its victim:

The alleged cat-faced woman is described as having a small head only a little larger than a grapefruit but comes exactly like that of a cat, with fur, ears and eyes of feline appearance. The 'woman' is supposed to be dressed in a long black coat and also has paws and claws just as a cat has.

One darky claims he was actually attacked by the feline-human being on East Cheves street extension a block from the segregated school. The 'whatsis' assaulted him as he walked along the street at 11 o'clock, he is reported to have said, and scratched his face and bruised his eye. He was saved, however, by his dog who was with him at the time. The monster fled into the darkness when good old Rover came to the rescue.

A negro girl household worker also reported she saw the cat-woman in the darkness on a recent evening. Reports have been going the rounds of East Florence for several days but only yesterday they reached giant proportions.

Houses that haven't been locked for years are being barred nightly and a reign of terror existed throughout the negro district. Negroes working in West Florence were going home at night in taxis, afraid to walk in the darkness alone.

Chief of Police McLaurin Burch, informed last night of the rumours, said he had heard nothing of the monster, and that so far as he knew no one has even called the police. Police officer WK Faley on night duty said he had heard of the reports but that so far as he knew no one had called on the police for investigation. [1]

A day later the scare still was such that the newspaper published a lengthy story, and during its own investigations it quickly stumbled into foaftale territory:

Despite the pooh-poohs of the more level-headed members of the citizenry and the open indifference of the police, East Florence continued in the grip of a stark terror yesterday as darktown's frightened denizens hugged the fireside after nightfall in an attempt to avoid the mysterious 'cat-faced' woman.

Fantastic tales of the feline woman's nocturnal activities *buzzed over the entire city and there was hardly a person east of the railroad tracks who hadn't a theory of what 'it' or 'she' was or just what started the whole affair. Most authorities seemed agreed that the beast, human or whatever it might be called, was actually in the flesh, but a few of the older and more superstitious generation whispered darkly that it undoubtedly was a 'hant.'*

Meanwhile, police authorities said they had heard nothing of the depredations of the so-called cat-woman and didn't believe there was anything to it anyway.

'I wish somebody would hurry up and find that darn woman, who ever she is,' said Chief of Police McLaurin Burch last night. 'I'm getting good and tired of having people call up here at all hours of the day.'... Burch said he was certain the whole affair was nothing but a joke someone was playing on the negroes and that he had paid no attention to it. So far as he knew none of the police force had investigated and did not intend to.

Rumours of the presence of the 'whatsit' in the East Florence vicinity sprang up some time during the latter part of last week. The original tales were in the effect that 'she' had attacked or attempted to attack several coloured persons in the still night. The woman was alleged to have the head of a cat – eyes, ears and all – and paws with long claws or fingernails, plus the body of a woman.

Lurid tales of scratches and bruises inflicted on negro men of East Florence on dark nights gained credence, but inquiry on the part of Morning News *reporters failed to reveal a single instance of a person who even claimed he had seen the phenomenon. The reporters were met at every turn with the answer, 'Well, I didn't see her, but a feller told me he did', or 'I heard some folks talkin' about it and somebody said they knew a feller that seen it.'*

In one or two cases names were mentioned, but those persons either did not exist or they had left for parts unknown after the meeting. A further note of rumour was introduced into the situation last night when a large number of street lights in East Florence went out, reportedly caused by a short circuit. Persons out at that late hour who had heard the reports were even more frightened than ever... Saner observers insisted that the cat-woman rumour was nothing to be alarmed about, but they were divided as to their ideas on just what basis there was to the reports. Some believed it was merely a figment of someone's imagination – someone who delights in seeing rumours start and grow like a snowball.

Others insisted that there was some basis for the rumour, but it was nothing worse than a prankster trick effected through a little theatrical work accomplished with a false face and other paraphernalia. A more liberal school of thought figured that it was the work of someone who was taking this means to make his – or her – living through thievery. This view gained credence when reports circulated that the cat-woman had entered various houses in the darktown section on the strength of threats against those who refused to furnish her with food. (Some said she used profanity and asked for a drink of liquor.) As in all other tales, however, none of these could be tracked down to its source.

One report that holds a note of plausibility was that the cat-woman had escaped or quit a circus where she occupied a prominent place in the sideshow. Further reports said that the woman was being sought by circus officials, but they could not be confirmed.

A clerk at Vaughn's store on East Cheves street reported that a mulatto woman wearing a bandana handkerchief over her head stopped in the establishment about 10.30 Tuesday night. The handkerchief was pointed on the head where it was tied, which, the clerk thought, might give an appearance of a cat's ears. The woman wore large, thick-rimmed glasses also, which might have helped create the illusion of a cat's face. The woman was heard to use several 'curse-words' under her breath, which ties up with the reports that the cat-woman was somewhat profane. Still another theory is to the effect that the creature is merely a harmless but deformed woman whose actions stimulate the fertile imaginations of the darktown minds.

Nevertheless, darktown is taking no chances. Doors are being barred and windows shut tight at night. Thus far no authenticated reports of injuries inflicted have been made by the terrifying creature, but none apparently are thinking of that." [2]

A day later the newspaper commented that the cat-faced woman remained a mystery, and the police, while still doing nothing, actually welcomed it:

Chief of Police McLaurin Burch apparently had more weighty problems to ponder than how to prevent a scare among darktown residents. The police in reality were inclined to favour continuance of the catwoman's presence in Florence… 'I don't believe we'll have any trouble with these darkies at night – and that's when they do most of their devilment. I went down Cox street last night a little after dark and didn't see but one negro. It ought to be a good thing while it lasts.'

The traffic problem also is somewhat alleviated while the scare is on, another officer indicated. Small negro boys and girls – and white ones as well – who raced roller skates from Santa Claus, are seen no more on the streets at night...

While the famous cat-woman was still the subject of many wild tales, authenticated instances of attacks in the dark are yet unreported. Neither could the persons who claimed she had entered their houses – according to the fast-flying rumours – be located.

While families here still were attempting to satisfy their negro servants that the cat-woman was a non-existent phantom tale and her origin in the mind of some persons who liked to spread false rumours. Such attempts were mostly unsuccessful, however, and cooks commonly reported late in the morning and left early in the afternoon in order not to be out of their homes in the dark.[3]

On 3 February, a *Florence Morning News* columnist remarked:

The cat-faced woman scare seems to have eased off a bit, but it was good while it lasted… Numbers of white people took advantage of the opportunity to frighten darkies working for them with tales of what they saw while driving through East Florence at night. Just lots of 'em swallowed the tales too.

Just how seriously the coloured gentry did take the stories came home forcefully to Morning News *reporters out running down facts about the spectre. A negro told a newsman he knew of a certain man who saw the cat-faced woman. The reporter looked up the man and learned that he was merely joking. A number of such instances lead us to the conclusion that the whole thing had its start in someone's imagination.*

The police, of course, figured in many of the rumours. It was told one officer picked up the woman one night in his car and told her she was going to jail. 'You can't arrest me,' she spat at him. He paid no attention, then looked in the back seat. It was full of rattlesnakes. Another version had it that she went to jail but turned into a rattlesnake and crawled out.

One officer had to take a good deal of ribbing from his colleagues over another idle tale. It was reported that he asked chief Burch to be relieved of night duty on account of the cat-faced woman. He'll probably be months trying to live that story down… [4]

The scare is interesting on many levels, one being the experience and perception of anomalies by America's black populace in the Southern parts of the United States where racism was rampant, and the response by the white authorities and the predominantly white media – the local newspaper – of that time. Folklorist Patricia Turner points out that black communities in America produce different urban legends from those of their white counterparts.[5] UFOs, for instance, are not important at all; surprising, seeing as *the* canonical UFO abduction tale features a mixed race marriage couple – Betty and Barney Hill.

What was the cat-faced-woman of Florence, and was there any truth to the stories of her doings? Was it an urban legend born out of racial tensions, or are its origins to be found elsewhere, perhaps in one of the many suggestions offered at the time? Throughout the scare the police refused to investigate, although there were tales where the police did capture the cat-faced woman, but she easily proved their match by shape-shifting and escaping: indifference turns to impotence in the face of the terrible monster that briefly roamed Florence's night streets before it disappeared forever.

Or did it? Since the newspaper published nothing more on the monster, we have no way of knowing.

NOTES

1. 'Cat-Faced Woman Terrifies Negroes. Rumors Increase Of Half-Human Monster Stalking East Florence Nightly', *Florence Morning News*, Florence, South Carolina, 31 Jan 1939

2. 'Cat-Faced Woman Tale Pooh-Poohed By Police', *Florence Morning News*, 1 Feb 1939.

3. 'Cat-Woman Story Appears Unsolved', *Florence Morning News*, 2 Feb 1939.

4. 'Some People Are Like That', *Florence Morning News*, 3 Feb 1939.

5. See Patricia Turner, *I Heard It Through The Grapevine: Rumor in African-American Culture*, University of California Press, 1994.

LONDON'S HAUNTED MURDER HOUSES

PART 2

London is full of properties that once witnessed bloody murders and subsequent hauntings. Some have vanished, some still stand, but their violent histories are largely forgotten. In this second part of his investigation, JAN BONDESON goes in search of some of the bloodiest addresses of the great metropolis.

The writer has actually stayed – for one night only – at No 16, Manor Place, Walworth Road, where, in the 'sixties', that unexampled young villain, Youngman, killed his mother, sweetheart, and two brothers in order to procure the pitiful sum of £100… I have been over the house – in Priory Street, Kentish Town, at which the somewhat mysterious Mrs Pearcey slew her rival, Mrs Hogg, and the little house in Church Villas, Richmond, where Kate Webster killed and mutilated Mrs Thomas, is sufficiently familiar to me.
Guy Logan, from *Famous Crimes Past & Present*.

How often did it happen that London houses in which celebrated murders have been committed got a reputation for being haunted? The answer, in Victorian times, is quite frequently. Indeed, a remarkable 1902 newspaper article stated that: "It is a fact that over 1,000 houses in London are tenantless because they are supposed to be haunted. Seventy-one of these have been the scenes of murder…" In the first part of this article, attention was given to the Bloomsbury 'Murder Neighbourhood' and its wealth of mysterious murders and haunted houses, but there are many more of these London houses of horror, all over the great Metropolis, and here I will present some of them.

12 WELLINGTON TERRACE

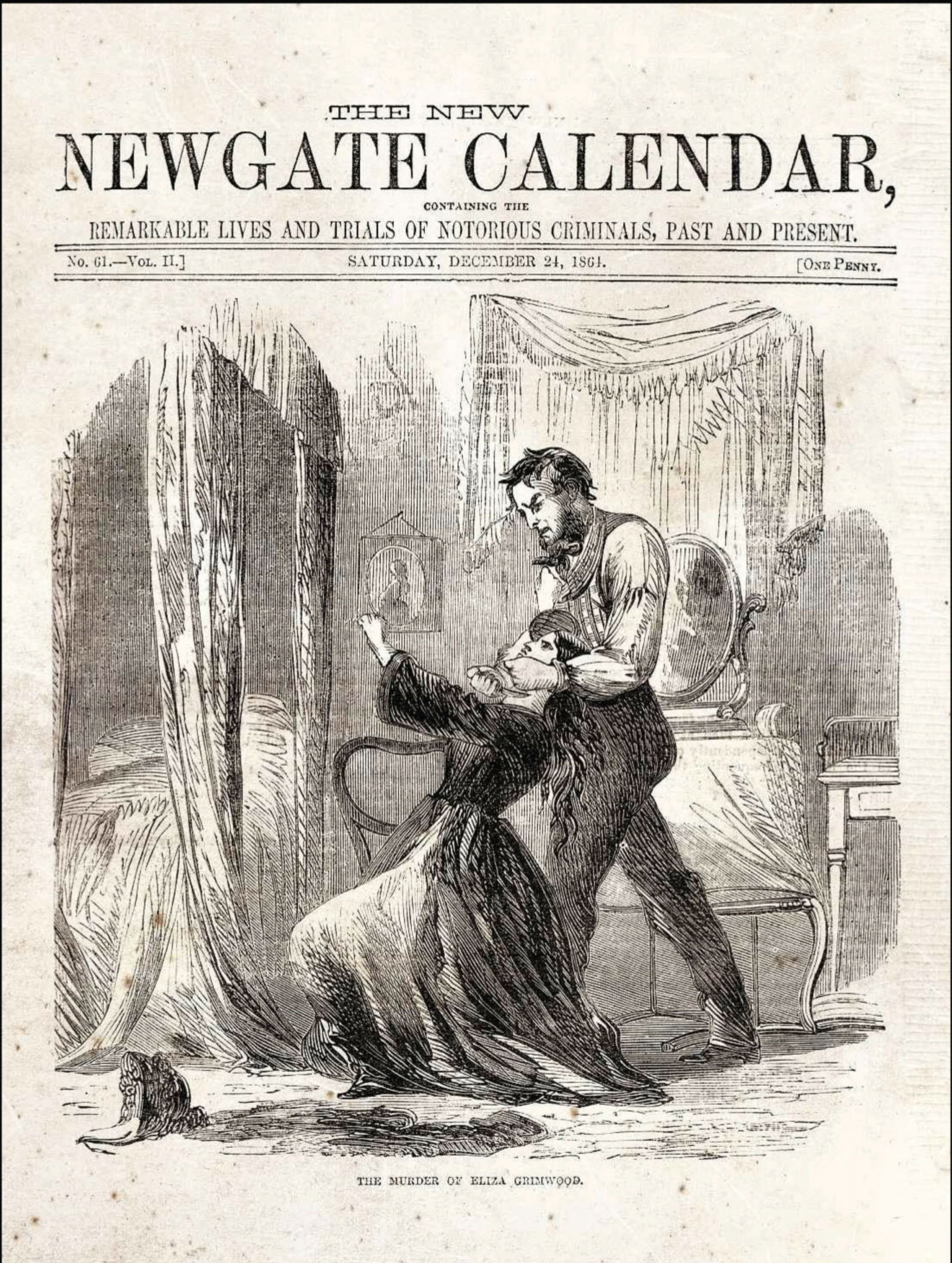
One of London's most celebrated early murder houses was 12 Wellington Terrace, just off Waterloo Road, where the beautiful young prostitute Eliza Grimwood had been murdered in 1838. The house was besieged by a throng of murder-mongers, and got a very bad reputation indeed. Rumours soon spread that the empty house was haunted by Eliza's restless spirit. When Elliott O'Donnell made some inquiries about local ghosts in the 1890s, he found a street hawker named Jonathan who had been a boy at the time when Eliza was murdered. Jonathan's mother, who had known Eliza, used to say that she was "as tidy a looking girl as was to be found in the 'ole neighbourhood." A certain Mrs Glover had twice seen Eliza's ghost, dressed just as she had been in her lifetime, making the bed in the murder room. People in Wellington Terrace saw the ghost looking out through the ground floor window so often that they got used to it, and were not alarmed.

PEOPLE SAW THE GHOST SO OFTEN THEY GOT USED TO IT

16 MANOR PLACE

Crime writer Guy Logan (see **FT310:36**), who had a great liking for visiting historical murder houses, once spent a night at Walworth's house of horrors, 16 Manor Place. Here, back in 1860, William Godfrey Youngman had murdered his mother, two brothers, and sweetheart in a veritable bloodbath. After the murder, the landlady of the house received a guinea from the poor box, since no lodger would live in the haunted murder house. 16 Manor Place retained some of its notoriety well into the 1920s and 1930s; it was demolished in the 1970s for the construction of the new Walworth Police Station. Some older houses across the road show what it must have looked like: a drab, terraced, three-story building. Murder returned to Manor Place in 1887, when Robert Pickersgill cut the throat of his wife Mary Jane at No 125, before committing suicide near Stoke Newington railway station. In 1918, William Constance murdered his wife at 157 Manor Place, and was committed to stand trial for the crime. Manor Place has been extensively developed, and none of its murder houses remains.

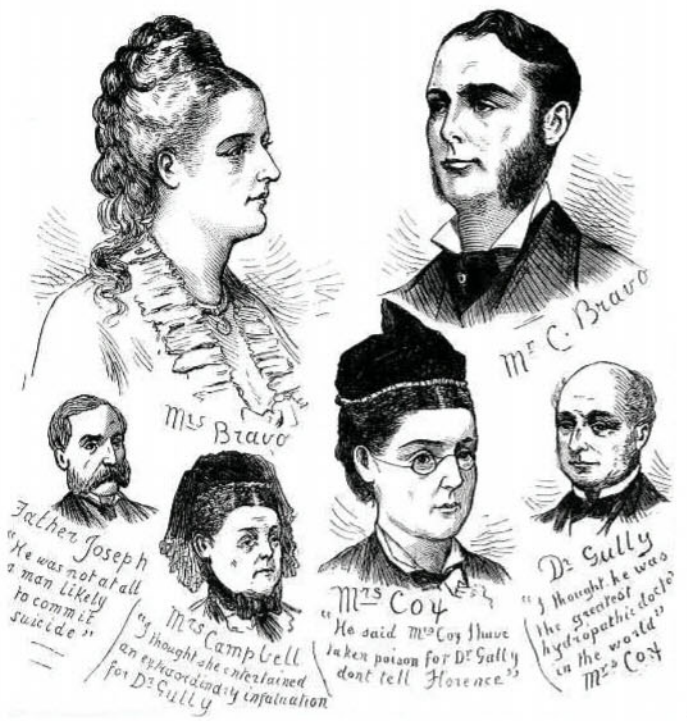
LEFT: The drab terraces of Manor Place awaiting demolition. **OPPOSITE:** Eliza Grimwood is murdered, from the *New Newgate Calendar*.



THE NEW
NEWGATE CALENDAR,
CONTAINING THE
REMARKABLE LIVES AND TRIALS OF NOTORIOUS CRIMINALS, PAST AND PRESENT.

No. 61.—Vol. II.] SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 1864. [One Penny.

THE MURDER OF ELIZA GRIMWOOD.


Mr C. Bravo
Mrs Bravo
Father Joseph
"He was not at all a man likely to commit suicide"
Mrs Campbell
"I thought she entertained an extraordinarily infatuation for Dr Gully
Mrs Cox
"He said Mrs Cox I have taken poison for Dr Gully dont tell Florence"
Dr Gully
"I thought he was the greatest hydropathic doctor in the world"
Mrs Cox

JAN BONDESON

LEFT: All the major players in the Bravo drama, from the *Penny Illustrated Paper*, 5 August 1876. **ABOVE:** The Priory as it appears today. **BELOW:** Harriet Staunton at her wedding and at her miserable death, and portraits of the four Penge miscreants, from the *Illustrated Police News*, 6 October 1877.

THE PRIORY

In 1876, the young solicitor Charles Bravo was murdered at the Priory, a grand country house in Balham. His young wife Florence and her companion Mrs Jane Cox were both suspected of poisoning him. At a scandalous coroner's inquest, Florence's affair with the elderly practitioner Dr James Gully was exposed, as was the fact that after some contraceptive mishap, Gully had performed an abortion on his favourite patient in her bedroom at the Priory, with Mrs Cox acting as nurse. Still, the volatile Florence did not seem like a conniving murderess. As for Mrs Cox, she could be proven to have told many lies, and actively tried to prevent the detection of the murderer. The coroner's inquest returned a verdict of murder against some person or persons unknown, and the Bravo mystery remains unsolved to this day. As for the murder house, it is reputed to have been haunted by Charles Bravo's restless spirit for many years. The father of Mr James Clark, a chronicler of London ghosts, knew the Priory as a haunted house in the 1940s. The Priory has been subdivided into flats, but the haunting has continued. According to James Ruddick, author of the most recent book on the Bravo murder mystery, Charles Bravo haunted his former bedroom with such frequency that one of the residents called in a priest to perform a ceremony of exorcism. This ceremony is said to have had the desired effect.

34 FORBES ROAD

In 1877, the 37-year-old Mrs Harriet Staunton was found starved to death at 34 Forbes Road, Penge. Her much younger husband Louis Staunton, who had married her for money three years earlier, and his brother Patrick, were suspected of having murdered her, along with Patrick's wife and Louis's mistress Alice Rhodes. Although the medical evidence was by no means conclusive, and although the defence raised the possibility that Harriet had died from meningeal tuberculosis, all four prisoners were found guilty and sentenced to death by the 'hanging judge' Sir Henry Hawkins. In the end, the sentences of the three Stauntons were commuted to life imprisonment, and Alice Rhodes, against whom the evidence had been feeble to say the least, was acquitted. Alice got a job as a barmaid after her narrow escape. One day, she pulled a pint for Sir Henry Hawkins, who remarked that surely, he had seen her somewhere before.

"You have, my Lord. I am Alice Rhodes, and your Lordship once sentenced me to death."

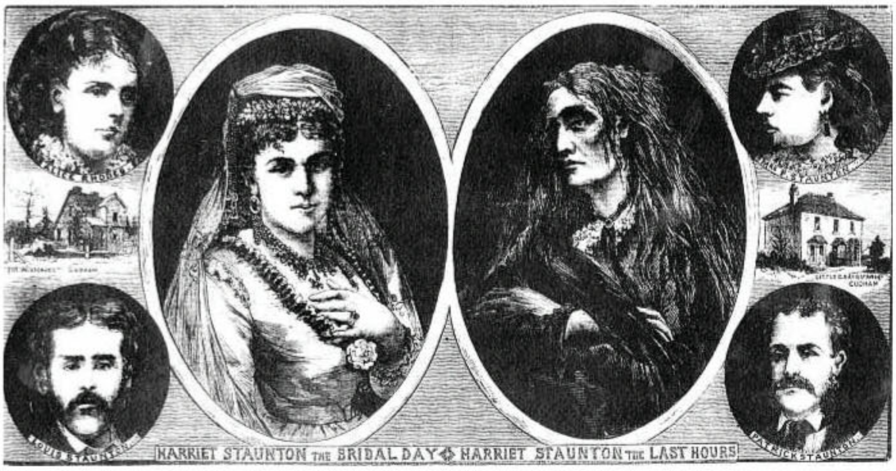
"Good heavens! I hope you are now doing well for yourself?"

"I am, quite well – no thanks to your Lordship!"

As for the murder house at No 34 Forbes (today Mosslea) Road, Penge, it was reported to be haunted by Harriet's ghost for many years. A woman growing up there in the 1950s remembers the lurid tales told about No 34, not far from where her family lived. When it was featured by the author Dorothy Cox in 1989, No 34 Mosslea Road was in a rather shabby condition, but when I saw it in 2012, the murder house was looking quite well cared for.

2 PRIORY STREET

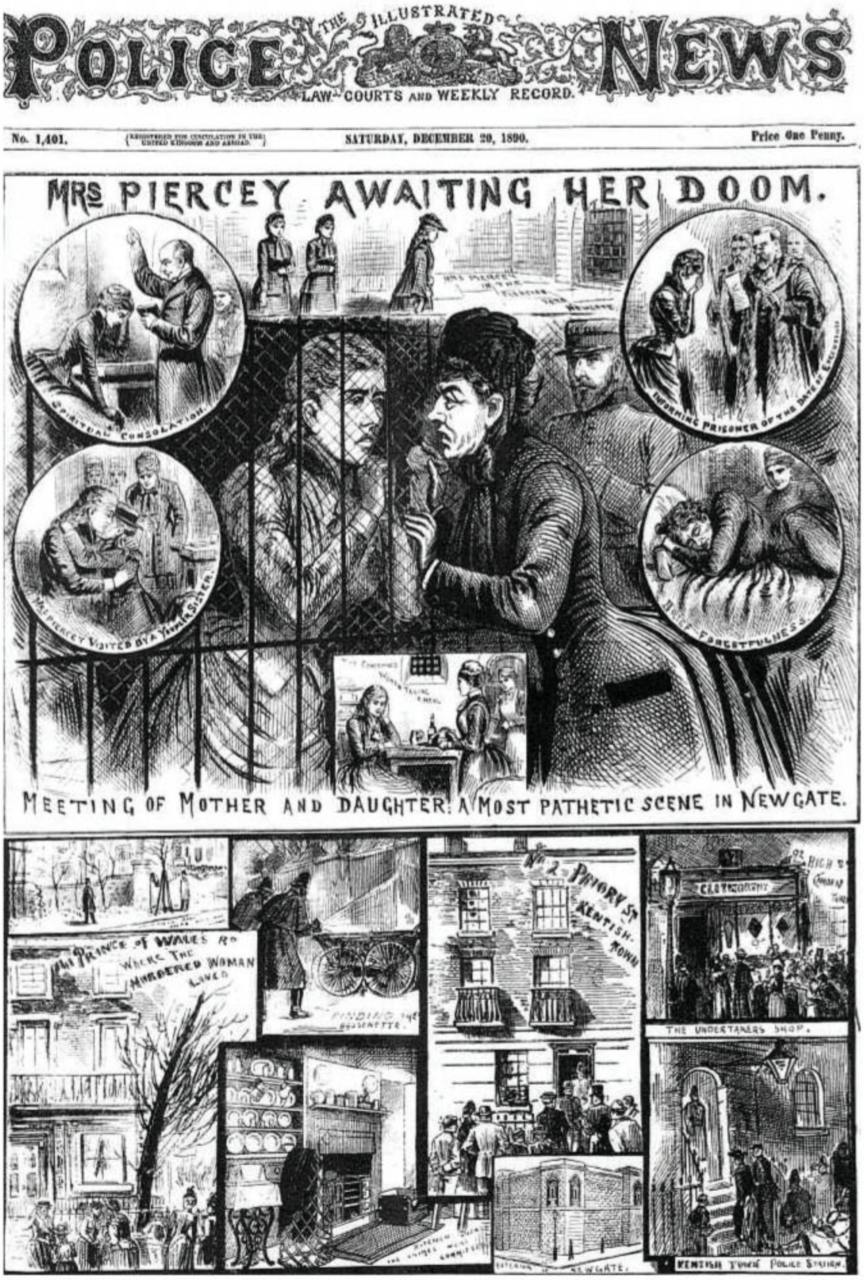
Mary Eleanor Pearcey, a sinister young woman if ever there was one, became the mistress of a well-to-do local businessman, who installed her in the ground floor flat at 2 Priory (now Ivor) Street, Kentish Town. Contemporary accounts agree that in spite of her indifferent moral qualities, Mary Eleanor was a quite attractive young woman, with long russet hair, fine blue eyes and regular features. She befriended some of the neighbours, particularly the family of a grocer named Hogg, who lived in Prince of Wales Road nearby. Mary Eleanor became fond of Frank, the son of the family, who worked as an assistant in the grocer's shop, and gave him the key to 2 Priory Street. But Frank was also 'walking out' with an accommodating young woman named Phoebe Styles. When Phoebe 'got in the family way' in November 1888, Frank felt obliged to marry her. In late 1890, Mary Eleanor became increasingly infatuated with Frank. Although he still visited her regularly, she sent him many love letters, begging him to come more frequently. But Hogg was under pressure from his family to stay with Phoebe and her little daughter. On 23 October 1890, Mary Eleanor paid a boy to take a note to the Hogg lodgings at 141 Prince of Wales Road, inviting Phoebe to come round for tea,


ALICE RHODES
CUDHAM
LOUIS STAUNTON
HARRIET STAUNTON THE BRIDAL DAY
HARRIET STAUNTON THE LAST HOURS
STAUNTON
CUDHAM
PATRICK STAUNTON

ETIENNE GILFILLAN

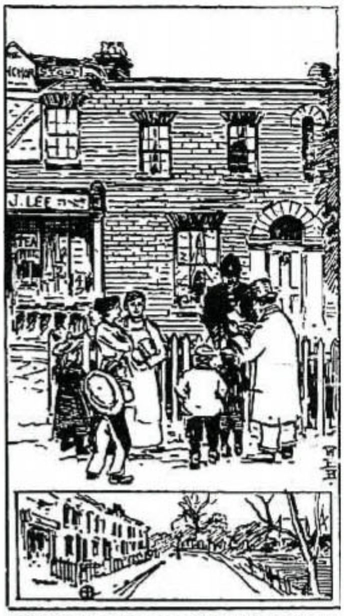
and to bring the baby. Phoebe did not come, but when there was a similar message the following day, she put baby Tiggie in a large perambulator, left a note for Frank saying "Shall not be gone long" and walked to 2 Priory Street, arriving around 4pm. Not long after, the next door neighbour heard glass breaking. She called out to Mary Eleanor, but there was no response, and the kitchen blinds were down. The upstairs neighbour at No 2 heard a baby scream, and later what sounded like several people walking around and moving things about.

The evening was cold and quite foggy. Still, several witnesses saw Mary Eleanor Pearcey wheeling the large perambulator through the streets. Some of them added that although she was pushing with all her might, she had great difficulty moving the heavily laden vehicle. Nevertheless, the white-faced, breathless woman kept on pushing the perambulator through the endless streets, until she had reached Belsize Park more than two miles away. In an area where some houses had recently been erected, by the crossing of Adamson Street and Crossfield Street, she emptied the perambulator of its contents. The overloaded vehicle had broken, so she left it behind in a side street, before walking home. Another witness saw the exhausted Mary Eleanor return to 2 Priory Street, reeling as if she was going to fall over at any moment. Later the same evening, the corpses of a young woman and a baby were found near Adamson Road. Miss Clara Hogg, Frank's sister, saw the description in the newspaper, and suspected that this unidentified woman might be her missing sister-in-law. Although her relatives pooh-poohed her concerns, she wanted to see the bodies. Mary Eleanor went with her to the mortuary. When the two women were taken into the presence of Phoebe Hogg's corpse, Mary Eleanor cried out "It is not her! It is not her! Let us go!" and made to pull Clara Hogg away. But, on closer inspection, Clara identified the body as that of her missing sister-in-law, and proceeded to identify the baby and the perambulator as well. Mary Eleanor's strange behaviour had attracted notice, and after the two women had been taken home in a cab, the police kept watch on her house to make sure she


THE ILLUSTRATED POLICE NEWS
LAW COURTS AND WEEKLY RECORD.
No. 1,401.
SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1890.
Price One Penny.
MRS PIERCEY AWAITING HER DOOM.
SPIRITUAL CONSOLATION
BRIEF FORGETFULNESS
MEETING OF MOTHER AND DAUGHTER: A MOST PATHETIC SCENE IN NEWGATE.
PRINCE OF WALES RD WHERE THE MURDERED WOMAN LIVED
FINDING THE BASSENETTE.
No 2 PRIORY ST KENTISH TOWN
92 HIGH ST
THE UNDERTAKERS SHOP.
EXTERIOR OF NEWGATE.
KENTISH TOWN POLICE STATION.

JAN BONDESON

TOP LEFT: The Priory Street murder house today. **TOP:** Mrs Pearcey awaiting her doom, and a sketch of the murder house, from the *Illustrated Police News*, 20 December 1890. **ABOVE:** The spooky tunnel underneath the railway, not far from Mrs Pearcey's house in Kentish Town.



SCENE OF THE TOOTING TRAGEDY.
NO. 12, FOUNTAIN ROAD.

FOUNTAIN ROAD SW
S139 JUD

JAN BONDESON

ABOVE LEFT: The Tooting murder house, from the *Penny Illustrated Paper,* 16 March 1895. **ABOVE RIGHT:** Old houses in Fountain Road today. **FACING PAGE:** Sensational scenes of the Tooting Horror, from the *Illustrated Police News*, 16 March 1895.

did not escape. They found Frank Hogg, who collapsed when he heard his wife was dead, exclaiming that he knew that he himself was partly at fault. He then told them all about his illicit romance with Mary Eleanor.

Later the same day, the police raided 2 Priory Street. Mary Eleanor let them in without demur. She sat in the front room, playing the piano loudly as the detectives inspected her kitchen. They found plenty of bloodstains on the walls, and signs that the floor had been recently cleaned. Mary Eleanor told them that she had been killing mice, but to produce such extensive bloodstaining would have required a veritable massacre of the murine tribe. Her hands were much scratched and bruised from a recent violent struggle. She was duly arrested, and at the coroner's inquest, a verdict of wilful murder was returned against her. On trial at the Old Bailey on 24 November 1890, the jury returned a verdict of guilty, and Mr Justice Denman sentenced Mrs Pearcey to death. Mary Eleanor Pearcey was executed on 23 December 1890. Guy Logan and other crime historians have not doubted her guilt, but there has been suspicion that another person was involved in the murder. In particular, the canny Guy questioned how, alone and unaided, Mrs Pearcey had been able to pack the dead body in the perambulator with the presumably still living child. But people *in extremis* sometimes have surprising strength, and the perambulator was the only chance for the desperate woman to dispose of her victims.

THE FLAT WAS HAUNTED BY THE SOUND OF A CHILD SCREAMING

In 1937, Priory Street changed its name to Ivor Street, for reasons unconnected with the murder. Guy Logan called this part of Kentish Town "as dull, ugly, and lugubrious a portion of London as any I know", but he was fortunate to have been spared the horrors of 1960s and 1970s architecture. Indeed, today the relatively isolated area near the Camden Road railway station has a certain old-world attraction, with its cobbled streets and well-kept terraced houses. Contemporary illustrations clearly show that Mary Eleanor Pearcy's house is the present-day 2 Ivor Street: a well-kept house subdivided into flats, still with its characteristic small cast-iron balconies intact. According to a now defunct Internet page, a former resident of the ground floor flat found it to be haunted by the sound of a child screaming, and bloodstains mysteriously appearing on the wall. She called the local vicar to have a ceremony of exorcism performed, and the haunting ceased.

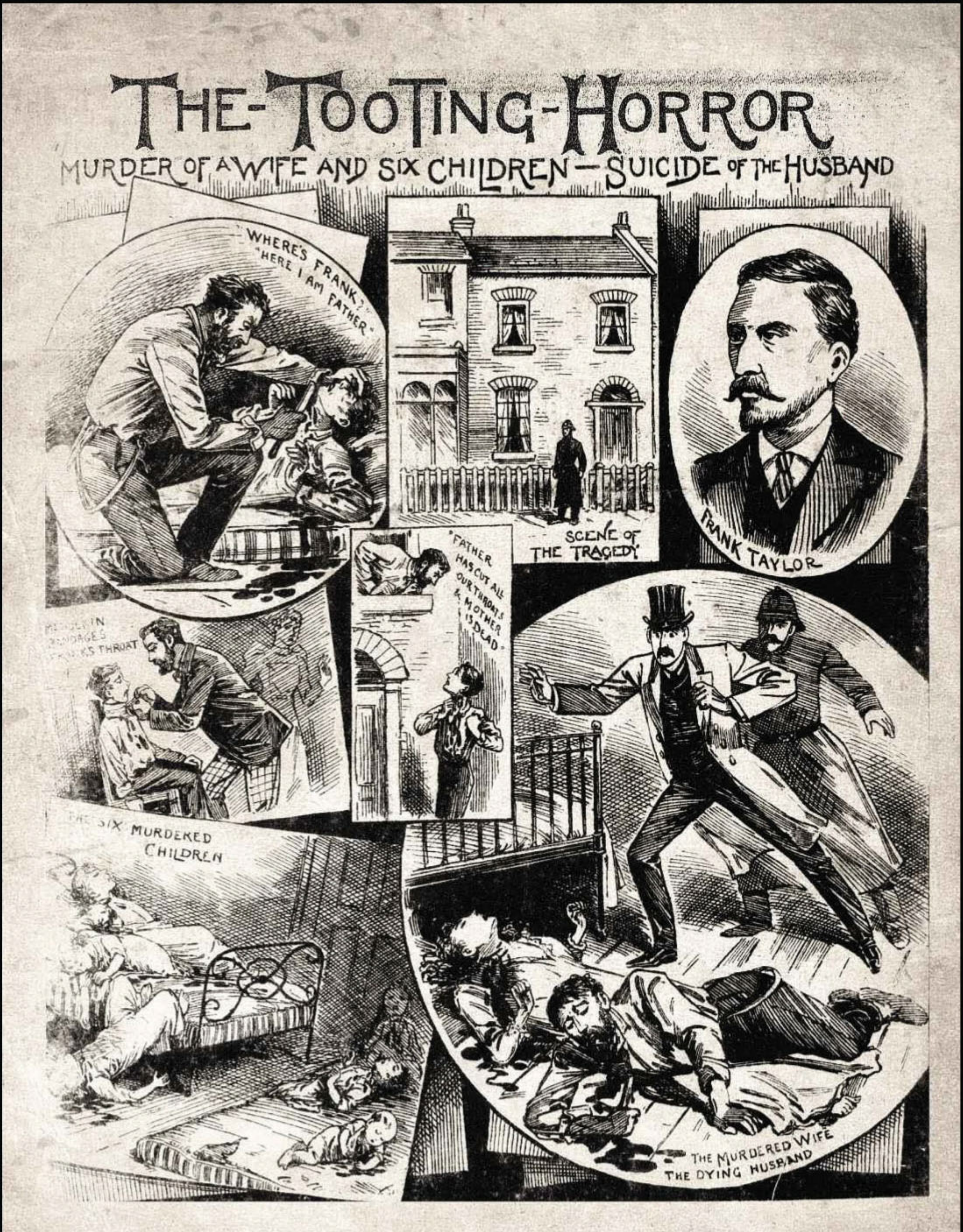
After visiting 2 Ivor Street, you should follow Mrs Pearcey's route through the cobbled streets to dispose of the dismembered remains of her victims. It leads through a spooky old tunnel underneath the railway line from Camden Road Station. It seems almost a certainty that on dark, foggy October evenings, that tunnel is haunted by the sound of the creaking wheels of a heavily laden Victorian perambulator.

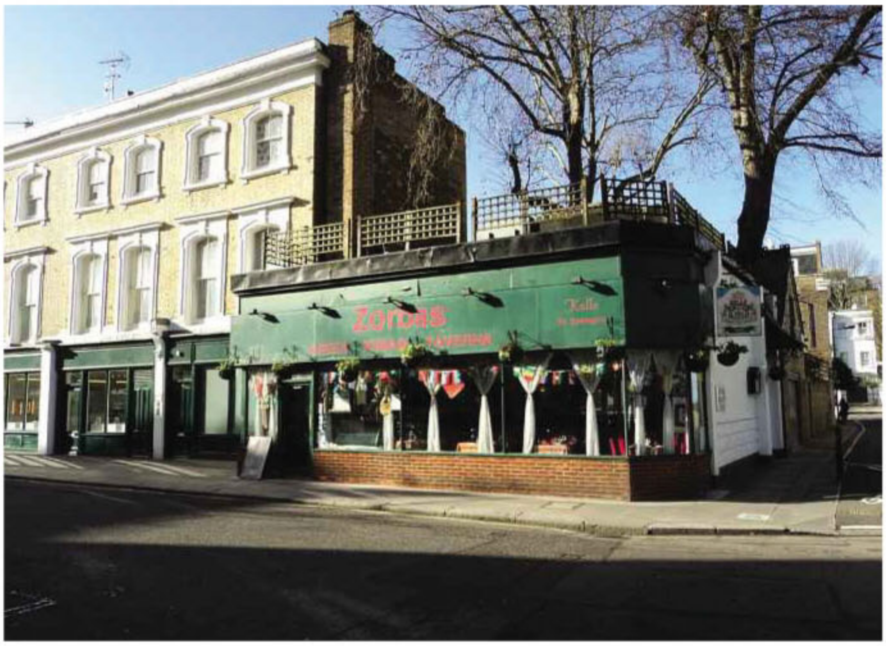
TOOTING'S HOUSE OF HORRORS

In the 1890s, the unemployed plasterer Frank Taylor was living in a small terraced house at 12 Fountain Road, Tooting, with his wife and seven children. At half past five in the morning of 7 March 1895, there was a knock at the door of one of the neighbours. When this neighbour looked out of the window, he saw Frank Taylor's son standing by the door. Bleeding profusely from the throat, arm and hands, Frank Jr called out 'Father cut all our throats and mother is dead!' The front door to 12 Fountain Road was locked and bolted, but the police constables broke it down. Inside the cramped little house they met with the grossest scenes. In the back bedroom, they found all six children dead in a bloodbath, with their throats cut. In the front bedroom, they found the body of Martha Taylor with injuries from a terrible struggle; her head was nearly severed from her body. Frank Taylor himself was the only person alive, in spite of a large gash in the throat, but he expired on the way to hospital. He had succeeded in exterminating his entire family, apart from his badly wounded son.

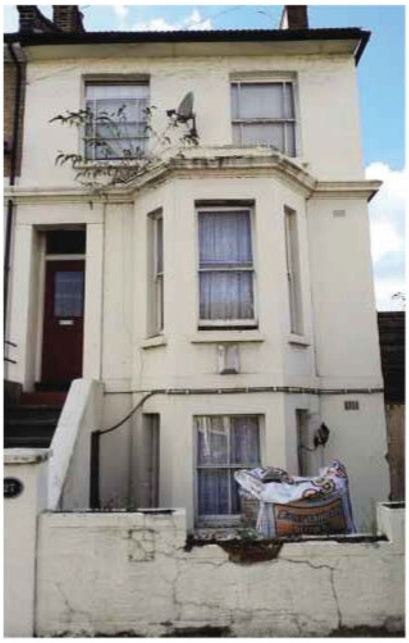
The Tooting Horror, as the Fountain Road mass murder was called, was widely reported in the newspapers. Although the irrepressible *Illustrated Police News* exploited the tragedy in some 'thrilling' illustrations, the majority of the press struck a more sombre note. The tragedy caused widespread revulsion throughout Britain. Some people blamed the Tooting authorities for their lack of charity: was it really right that an honest workman should become completely destitute, and driven to desperation, once he had lost his job? In a strange ceremony of exorcism, all the furniture, clothes, and other effects of the murdered family were dragged out of the murder house and burnt to ashes in a field to the rear of the house.

So, is Tooting's House of Horrors still standing? This question has been debated on the Tootinglife Internet homepage, but without any constructive deductions being made. Interestingly, one of the contributors could remember lodging in a haunted house in Fountain Road, where doors opened and shut of their own accord, and no tenant stayed longer than eight months. Although

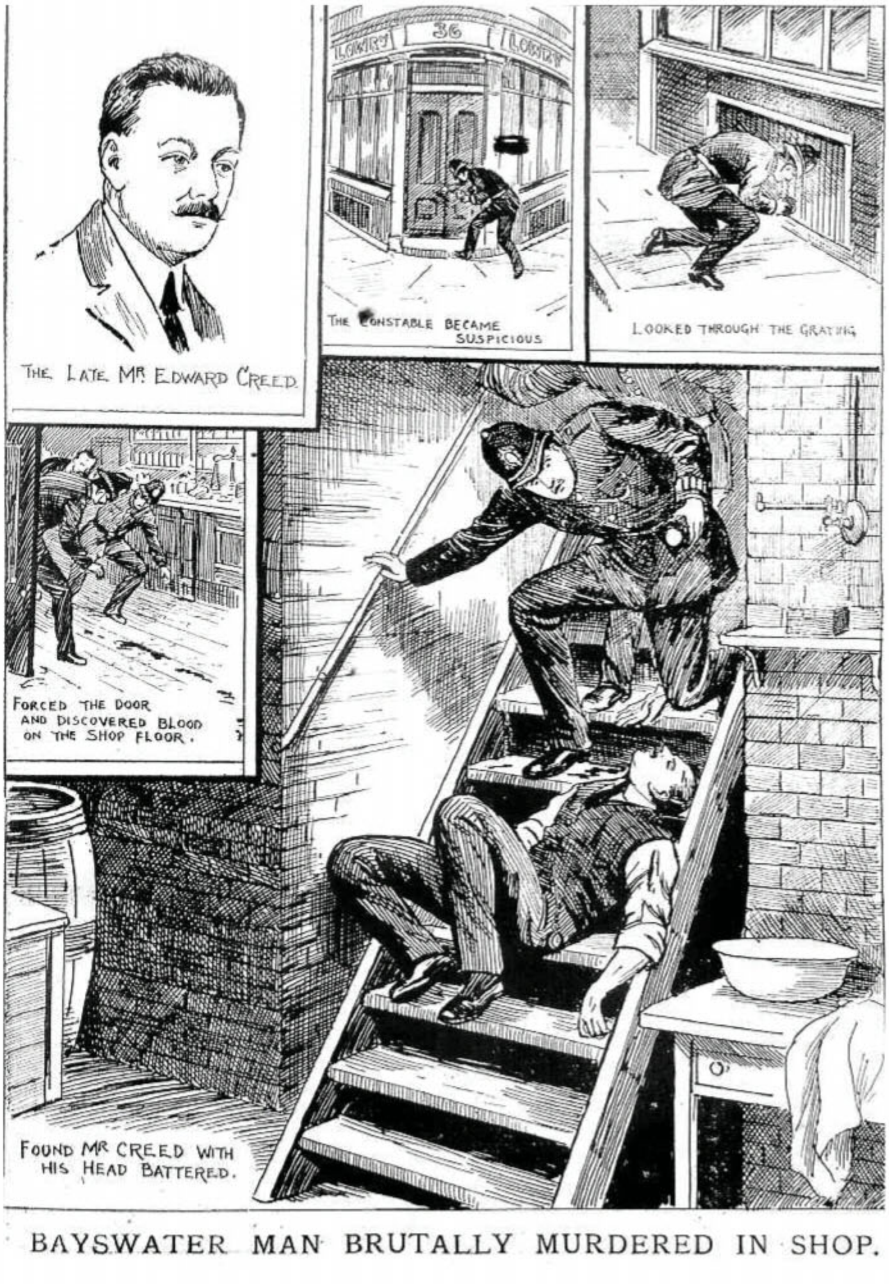

THE-TOOTING-HORROR
MURDER OF A WIFE AND SIX CHILDREN — SUICIDE OF THE HUSBAND
"WHERE'S FRANK?" "HERE I AM FATHER"
SCENE OF THE TRAGEDY
FRANK TAYLOR
MEDICO IN BANDAGES FRANK'S THROAT
"FATHER HAS CUT ALL OUR THROATS & MOTHER IS DEAD"
THE SIX MURDERED CHILDREN
THE MURDERED WIFE
THE DYING HUSBAND



JAN BONDESON



JAN BONDESON


36
LOWRY
LOWRY
THE CONSTABLE BECAME SUSPICIOUS
LOOKED THROUGH THE GRATING
THE LATE MR EDWARD CREED.
FORCED THE DOOR AND DISCOVERED BLOOD ON THE SHOP FLOOR.
FOUND MR CREED WITH HIS HEAD BATTERED.
BAYSWATER MAN BRUTALLY MURDERED IN SHOP.

LEFT: The haunted murder shop at No. 36 Leinster Terrace, and other images from the murder of Mr Creed, from the *Illustrated Police News*, 5 August 1926. **ABOVE LEFT:** 36 Leinster Terrace as it looks today. **ABOVE RIGHT:** 27 Doggett Road today.

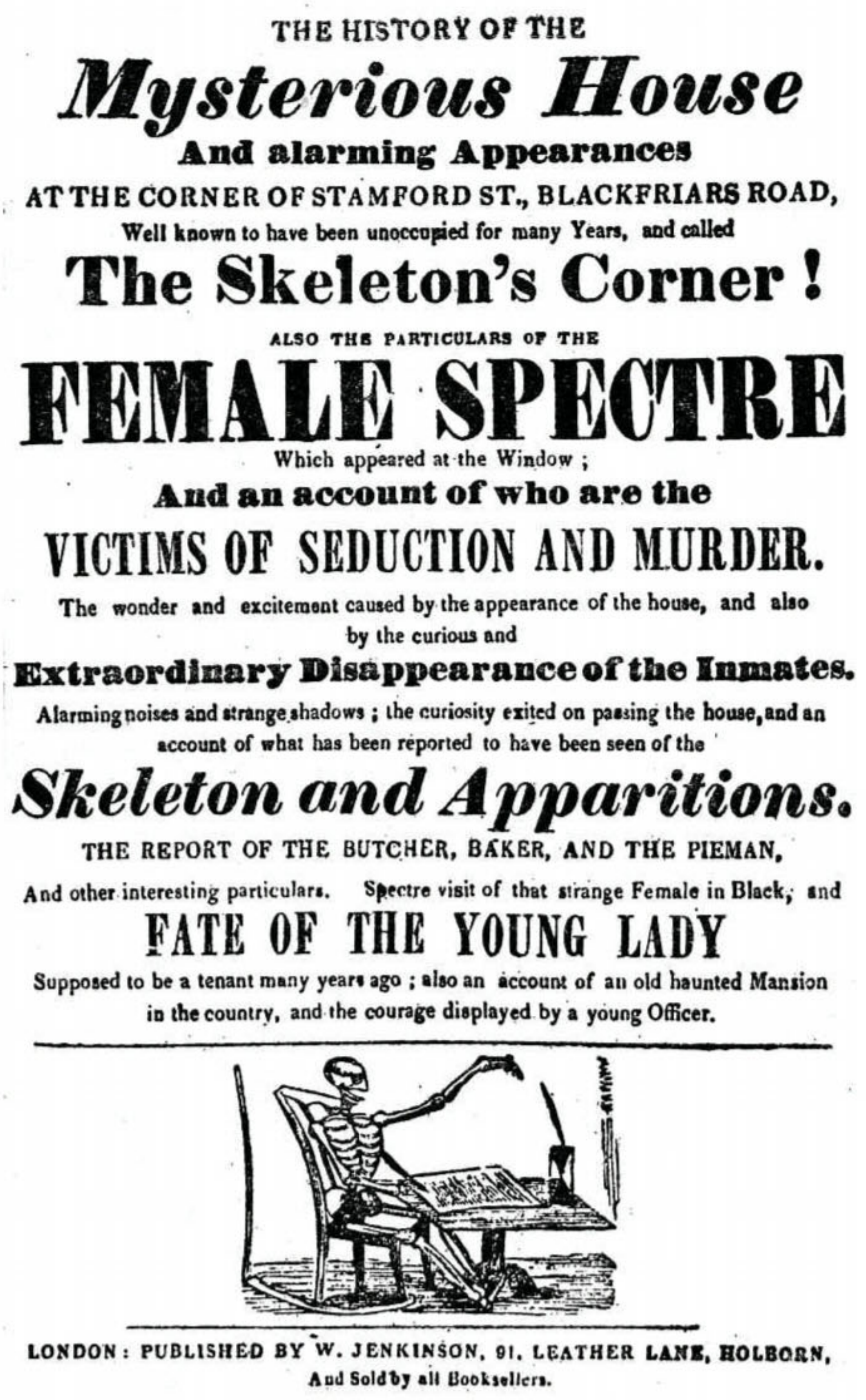
the houses in Fountain Road have been renumbered, analysis of the contemporary drawings of the murder house, and the relevant Post Office directories and Ordnance Survey maps, shows that the House of Horrors stands to this day; it looks well-nigh unchanged since the tragedy.

36 LEINSTER TERRACE

One of the most notorious haunted murder houses of modern London was the grocer's shop at 36 Leinster Terrace, just at the crossing with Craven Hill Gardens, where manager Mr Edward Creed was murdered by an unknown intruder in 1926. The motive was thought to be robbery, but excessive violence had been used against the hapless shopkeeper. Elliott O'Donnell declared the shop to be haunted by Creed's ghost, after staying there overnight and experiencing many unexplained and uncanny phenomena. Steadier and more balanced people than this jittery ghost-hunter also felt the ghost's presence, and as a result, the shop became very difficult to let. It is said to have stood until the late 1960s, although becoming increasingly derelict. In the end, the murder shop was demolished, along with No 35, and a small restaurant, hopefully without any resident ghost, was constructed on the site.

27 DOGGETT ROAD

In the wee hours of 22 April 1972, smoke was emerging from the end-of-terrace house at 27 Doggett Road, Catford. After the fire had been extinguished, the 26-year-old homosexual transvestite Maxwell Confait was found murdered in the first floor room where he had lodged. The house belonged to the West Indian metal worker Winston Goode, a bisexual who had picked up



THE HISTORY OF THE
Mysterious House
And alarming Appearances
AT THE CORNER OF STAMFORD ST., BLACKFRIARS ROAD,
Well known to have been unoccupied for many Years, and called
The Skeleton's Corner !
ALSO THE PARTICULARS OF THE
FEMALE SPECTRE
Which appeared at the Window ;
And an account of who are the
VICTIMS OF SEDUCTION AND MURDER.
The wonder and excitement caused by the appearance of the house, and also
by the curious and
Extraordinary Disappearance of the Inmates.
Alarming noises and strange shadows ; the curiosity exited on passing the house, and an
account of what has been reported to have been seen of the
Skeleton and Apparitions.
THE REPORT OF THE BUTCHER, BAKER, AND THE PIEMAN,
And other interesting particulars. Spectre visit of that strange Female in Black, and
FATE OF THE YOUNG LADY
Supposed to be a tenant many years ago ; also an account of an old haunted Mansion
in the country, and the courage displayed by a young Officer.

LONDON : PUBLISHED BY W. JENKINSON, 91, LEATHER LANE, HOLBORN,
And Sold by all Booksellers.

ABOVE: The title-page of a 1850 pamphlet about the (bogus) haunted murder house in Stamford Street, Blackfriars.

Confait at a gay club and invited him to No 27. Goode was the initial suspect, since he lied about his activities on the night of the murder, but although questioned harshly by the police, he made no admission of guilt. Instead, the detectives picked up a gang of three youths suspected of starting fires near Doggett Road, and they confessed to both their arsonous activities and to the murder of Maxwell Confait. On some very flimsy evidence, they were all found guilty and given lengthy prison sentences, although a Court of Appeal freed them in 1975, and they ended up receiving compensation for their years in prison.

When the police investigation resumed, it was suspected that two homosexuals had killed Maxwell Confait, perhaps as a result of a mishap in some perverted bondage game. One of them was already serving a lengthy prison sentence, and the other soon committed suicide, so they were never prosecuted, and the Doggett Road murder has remained unsolved. As for the murder house, there have been rumours that Confait's first-floor room was haunted. Groans and bumps in the night were regularly reported by the next inhabitants of the house. In 1985, a team of paranormal investigators is said to have stayed at the premises overnight, and photographed 'orbs' in the murder room.

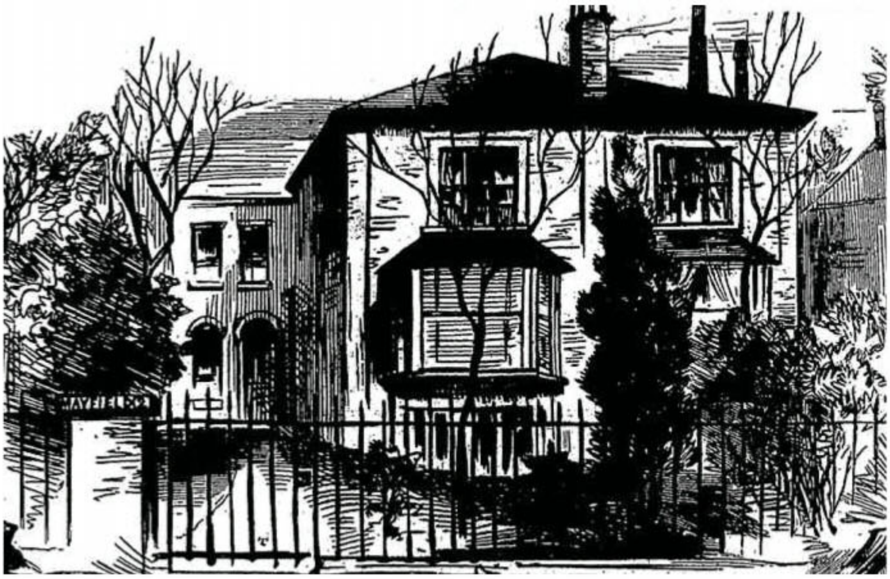
ANATOMY OF A MURDER HOUSE

The majority of the haunted houses of London appear to fit into four categories. Firstly, there are the houses presumed to be haunted by some famous personage (Lord Nelson, John Ruskin, Charles Dickens and so on) who had once lived there. These stories are often intended for the consumption of tourists.

Secondly, there is the poltergeist type of haunting, which tends to be independent of misdeeds committed by former inhabitants of the house; many sceptics believe that mischievous adolescents are responsible for some of the historical instances of poltergeist activity. Although the abode of that doyen of London's poltergeists, the Cock Lane Ghost, is no longer in existence, several celebrated London 'poltergeist houses' of the 1920s and 1930s remain to this day. 8 Ferrestone Road, Hornsey, where lumps of coal flew through the air back in 1921, still stands, and the humble little terraced house at 8 Eland Road, Battersea, home to a well-known poltergeist haunting in 1928, still frowns upon the passer-by.

Thirdly, it was not uncommon that houses of a very dilapidated and neglected appearance became notorious in the neighbourhood. They might fit into a 'Miss Havisham' or 'Dirty Dick' legend, and be considered the abode of some tragic recluse who had once been crossed in love, or, alternatively, that they were once the site of a gruesome murder, and shunned ever since, were now haunted. Examples of the former topos are Nathaniel Benthey's old house in Leadenhall Street, which no longer stands; Dirty Dick's Tavern in Bishopsgate purchased some of Bentley's paraphernalia, but has nothing to do with the original legend. There was a similar story about 19 Queen's Gate, Kensington, around the turn of the century, due to the house's neglected and begrimed appearance. Richard Whittington-Egan investigated a Liverpool legend involving an old house at 1 Mulgrave Street, said by many people to have been the home of a 'Miss Havisham' character; but the truth turned out to be that it had been deserted for many years after its owner died in 1906, since his maiden sister thought it harboured too many painful memories.

A good example of the pseudo-murder house variant was the 'haunted house' at 43 Stamford Street, Blackfriars, which in the 1850s was said to have been the site of a terrible murder, and haunted ever since. The truth is that the house belonged to an eccentric old lady, Miss Angelina Reid, who deliberately allowed it to go to ruin, in order to spite her nephew and heir. At night, she and her elderly servant sometimes surveyed the dusty, decaying rooms by the light of an old lantern, thus giving rise to the haunting legend. One of the reasons that 50 Berkeley Square was believed to be haunted was its neglected appearance, compared with the other houses on the square. People made up various stories to explain this discrepancy,



ABOVE LEFT: A genuine murder house at 9 Park Road, Richmond – but one without any ghosts. **ABOVE LEFT:** 50 Berkeley Square, on the other hand, was thought to be haunted because of its dilapidated appearance, but required a wholly made-up murder to explain any equally notional ‘ghosts’.

one of which involved a murder on the premises.

Fourthly, we have the ‘genuine’ haunted murder houses of London. In Victorian times, ihouses in which bloody murders had occurred frequently developed a reputation for being haunted. The house at what is today 9 Park Road, Richmond, where the servant Kate Webster murdered and dismembered her mistress Mrs Julia Thomas in 1879 before boiling the body parts in the kitchen copper, is recorded to have stood empty for many years, since nobody would live in such a house of horrors. But in 1897, a lady and her servant moved in, without being disturbed by the ghost of the brutal Kate brandishing a chopper and pursuing her timid old mistress. When Elliott O’Donnell made a polite inquiry about the spectral inhabitants of No 9, he was surprised and dismayed to find that the place was not haunted. Guy Logan, who took a particular interest in this murder house, wrote that: “The majority of houses which have been the scenes of murder seem ever after to be under a cloud, and to shudder, as it were, from the public gaze, but this cannot be said of the neat and pretty little villa at Richmond, which was the locale of Kate Webster’s horrid crime. I have passed it many times in the course of years, and anything less like the popular conception of a ‘murder house’ it would be hard to imagine.” The house still stands today: a valuable and well looked-after semi-detached house in a peaceful Richmond street. Not many people know its horrible secret.

A murder house goes through three phases: notoriety, rehabilitation and oblivion. A minority of murder houses, mainly cheap and unattractive buildings that had witnessed the grossest and most horrible murders and achieved considerable media publicity, never emerge from the notoriety phase, and as a consequence are demolished. All the valuable London murder houses have entered the rehabilitation phase; however, some notorious Victorian murder houses waited a long time to become reintegrated into the neighbourhood. As we have seen, the Eliza Grimwood house at 12 Wellington Terrace kept its notoriety for decades, and the house where Kate Webster murdered Mrs Thomas was shunned for 18 years. Some of the haunted houses in the ‘Murder Neighbourhood’ were equally notorious: 12 Great Coram Street and in particular 4 Euston Square. In contrast, the rehabilitation of most modern murder houses is a comparably swift affair. There are several examples of London and provincial murder houses fetching very good prices and even being quite sought after. One of the most striking examples is the house at 20 Dewhurst Road, Brook Green, where the West London mystery man William John Saunderson-Smith was murdered in October 2011. An attractive house in a sought-after part of London, it would normally be snapped up very rapidly; but would the fact that the former owner had been tortured and murdered on the premises impede the sale? When Tates Estate Agents put the murder house on the market, *West London Today* had the headline “Fantastic Brook Green murder home for sale at £1.8M!” This newspaper did not believe that even a grisly murder would put off potential buyers in this very convenient part of London, however, and they were proved right: the murder house was soon under offer.

WOULD THE FORMER OWNER’S TORTURE AND MURDER ON THE PREMISES IMPEDE THE SALE OF THE HOUSE?

There would appear to be several reasons for this change in attitude. Firstly, the increased mobility in modern society has resulted in a decrease in local knowledge and sense of belonging: few modern people, apart from determined amateur historians with a taste for the macabre, bother to record the local murder houses. The gradual decline of Christianity, and even stronger decline in superstitious beliefs in hauntings and curses, has also played an important part: to a financially astute modern atheist, a murder house is just another house. And unlike the situation in Victorian times, when the *Illustrated Police News* and other newspapers freely published the full address of the most recent murder house, and sometimes a drawing of it as well, the numbers of murder houses are rarely divulged in the newspapers today. This means that the identity of a present-day murder house is known to a very limited number of people, and definitely not to out-of-town buyers or London property investors looking to expand their portfolios.

But when you walk the streets of the great Metropolis, evidence of its criminal past is everywhere to be seen: part of London’s forgotten history is that of its murder houses.

MURDER HOUSES OF LONDON
JAN BONDESON

This is an edited extract from Jan Bondeson's *Murder Houses of London* (Amberley Publishing, Stroud 2014)

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

JAN BONDESON is a senior lecturer at Cardiff University, a regular contributor to *Fortean Times* and the author of numerous books, including *The London Monster* (2000) and *Amazing Dogs* (2011).

Facts and fun for inquisitive Girls & Boys!

AQUILA MAGAZINE is ideal for children who want to know the whys and wherefores of everything.

AQUILA will start its young readers on the right track and feed their interest with factual articles, puzzles and fun-activities that are designed to ignite children's enthusiasm and creativity.

Every monthly issue of **AQUILA** has a new topic. Coming up next: Captain Cook, Sport and The Equator. There's no celebrity gossip or advertorial; instead, children can deepen their interest and understanding of the world around them.

Great gift for 8-12 year olds

Research suggests that one in five primary-aged children finds school work too simple, so it is reassuring to know that **AQUILA** Magazine, which is recommended by educational specialists, will provide challenges for our brightest children. You will not find **AQUILA** at the newsagents; it is only available by subscription.

"I've read every single one, and I'm still not bored!"

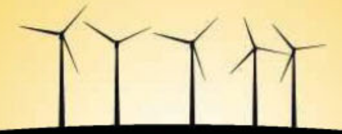
www.aquila.co.uk • 01323 431313

INVESTORS WANTED

JOIN OUR GROWING LIST OF INVESTORS IN SINGLE TURBINES

1 RENEWABLES LTD

a local wind-power company, seeks investors for renewables projects secured by the UK Government Feed-in Tariff.
Minimum amount 5k, no maximum amount.
Excellent returns for 20 year FiT programme, or for shorter periods if preferred. Corporate and personal guarantees provided.



CONTACT
Ian on 07713 912473 • ian@1renewables.com
or alastair@1renewables.com

Use our website enquiry form at: www.1renewables/get-in-touch.php

KRACKERS

KRACKERS COMICS & GAMES

COMICS AND GRAPHIC NOVELS
TOYS & ACTION FIGURES
RPG & BOARD GAMES
MAGIC THE GATHERING
GAMES WORKSHOP & WARHAMMER
YU-GI-OH POKEMON
STAR WARS & DR. WHO T- SHIRTS
ALIENS AND PREDATORS
ADVENTURE TIME & DUST TACTICS
& MY LITTLE PONY
A GAME OF THRONES
& THE WALKING DEAD
NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS
& MOVIE MERCHANDISE &
MUCH, MUCH, MORE!
MUM'S FAVOURITE SHOP

5 BATH PLACE, TAUNTON TA1 4ER
TEL: (01823) 335 057
WWW.KRACKERS.COM

THE NEW 'SPIRIT' OF SCOTLAND

BRIAN J ROBB talks to movie producer **PETER BROUGHAN** about the inaugural Scottish Paranormal Festival, set to spook Stirling this Hallowe'en.

You may have noticed that this is an important year for Scotland. As well as the Independence Referendum this September (which is yet to throw up anything fortean in nature), there is the inaugural Paranormal Scotland Festival taking place in the historic centre of Stirling this Hallowe'en. It's the brainchild of movie producer Peter Broughan (*The Flying Scotsman, Rob Roy*), who intends to make the unique event "the Cannes of paranormal festivals. The biggest, the best, the most serious, and the most fun. I want to make Stirling the go-to place on the planet at Hallowe'en. So no pressure then..."

With the aim of making Hallowe'en as big as Hogmanay, Broughan is putting together a host of events, speakers, and activities that he hopes will appeal to diverse audiences. "There are so many things that are just inexplicable and science is only starting to catch up," he says. "A lot of the time what we call paranormal is just science that has yet to be explained, so it's a subject very much for discussion and debate." Broughan took a break from his non-stop preparatory work on the Festival to give *Fortean Times* the low-down on what to expect, why Scotland is the ideal place for a celebration of all things spooky, and the times he has experienced the unexplained in his own life.

Fortean Times: How did you come to be co-ordinating Scotland's first paranormal festival?

Peter Broughan: My main creative satisfaction as a film producer comes from having ideas for film projects, then bringing them to fruition. The idea for doing the Scottish Paranormal Festival was exactly that. Once I had infected myself with the notion of a Paranormal Festival located in Scotland, I couldn't let it go, and felt compelled to follow it through.

FT: What skills do you feel your background gives you in launching this new venture?

PB: Producing this Festival is similar to doing a movie like *Rob Roy*, although a harder-to-finance, low-budget model might be a more appropriate comparison. First you have the idea, and then you set out to develop it. That means money, so the first money you spend is your own, and you might never get that back. You will never get back the enormous time and effort you spend pushing the thing forward, of course. You then have to find the main money to develop and then realise the project, and that means locating and persuading public and private sources of finance to come on board. As the producer you remain at risk until all the money is counted at the end of the event. I will be very happy just to break even on this first Festival!

"THE GAELS WILL TELL YOU THAT THE VEIL BETWEEN THE WORLDS IS THINNER HERE"

THE SCOTTISH
PARANORMAL
FESTIVAL

ABOVE: Filmmaker Peter Broughan counts *Blood on Satan's Claw* as a favourite movie. Good choice.

At every point you have to try to reduce your risk as much as possible, while presenting to backers, potential sponsors and investors something that looks like $10m, but costs closer to 10p. I suppose that the film producer's necessary skills of negotiation and persuasion come in handy here.

You also have to find good, like-minded people with enough skill, interest in the subject and time that they can spare – for free, of course – to become part of a team that will help to carry the concept forward. You then have to plan the programme, locate and negotiate the venues and assemble the talent – the speakers, performers and musicians – who will deliver the festival to an audience. The administrative detail involved in doing this is simply enormous. So, exactly like producing a film then...

FT: Why Scotland and why paranormal? Why does the country need a festival of strangeness?

PB: I think Scotland has always chimed with the notion of the paranormal in the public mind. People associate Scotland with ghosts and castles and the Loch Ness Monster, and the sometimes bloody, but still romantic, history of the country deepens these perceptions. More than that, the Gaels will tell you that the veil between our world and the other worlds is much thinner here, in the realm of us Celts. Scotland just seems to me like the most natural and appropriate place in the world to have a festival like this.

FT: Why did you choose Stirling as the venue, rather than festival-friendly cities like Edinburgh or Glasgow?

PB: The main reason is that Stirling is closer to where I live than Edinburgh, and my native city of Glasgow does not have a Castle! In truth, I did consider all three cities, but there were some negative reasons for not choosing the two larger ones. The positive reasons for Stirling is that it is a relatively undiscovered jewel in the nation's crown, with the best castle in the country, and it also boasts a wonderful mediæval precinct with a cathedral and a graveyard and other ancient buildings.

The fact that Stirling is also under-represented in terms of large-scale events like this (apart from the recent Bloody Scotland crime fiction festival) was also an advantage. Stirling is more of a clean slate than, say, Edinburgh, which arguably has an excess of festivals now, even if it also features a thriving set of paranormal industries that feed on the extraordinary history of that city.

I believe that our Festival has a much better chance of standing out and becoming a valued and permanent feature on the landscape in Stirling rather than elsewhere in Scotland. And Stirling is also a very, very spooky place indeed in its own right…

FT: What will the festival involve, and what special events are you hoping to host?

PB: The Festival will use a variety of media to celebrate the paranormal, from music, drama and comedy, to more conventional (but still fascinating) illustrated talks and lectures on all aspects of the paranormal spectrum. It will also feature storytelling, psychic shows, the Scottish Paranormal Film Festival, Fresh Blood (a filmmaking competition for younger filmmakers), a live performance of the *Haunting* song and story suite, and the Ghost Box where people can record their own weird experiences. We will have a special screening in a secret but stunning location of Murnau's silent classic movie *Nosferatu*, with live musical accompaniment.

We will also have paranormal comedy – yes, there is such a thing – including Ian D Montfort, the world's worst psychic. People can also enjoy Ghost Tours and Ghost Hunts, and Hallowe'en storytelling and films for the kids. Trips are also planned to other paranormal locations in the area, including a sky watching session at the famous UFO hotspot of nearby Bonnybridge.

To emphasise the Scottish love of a good party we will also present on Hallowe'en itself the world's first Masked Vampire Ceilidh in the main Albert Halls location. We are bringing over a number of very special guests from North America including Stanton Friedman, James Fox, and Nick Pope. My own special friends and favourites, The Navajo Rangers, are also coming all the way from Arizona. They are real-life, Federal officer-level, Native American, X-Files operatives.

FT: Who is the audience you're aiming the festival at, and how do you intend to reach them?

PB: We have to be very agile indeed in reaching all of the audiences – note the plural – that are interested in different aspects of the paranormal. Indeed, some of the speakers will argue that UFO encounters and ghostly experiences are not different, but just separate aspects of the same multi-faceted coin.

BOTH PICTURES: GETTY IMAGES

ABOVE: Stirling seems a perfectly spooky setting for the first Scottish Paranormal Festival.

I hope that people who come with an existing special interest might find themselves giving some attention to other subject areas. I also hope that people who are merely curious might develop a taste for the paranormal.

Because of the lack of money to pay for advertising we will focus on reaching people through social media, and through exploiting the inherent appetite of the established media for the strange and the unexplained. We enjoy the sponsorship of *Ghostbusters* star Dan Aykroyd's Crystal Head Vodka company, featuring their wonderful glass skull bottles, and we have already used his endorsement to great promotional effect.

FT: What's the emphasis: mythology, the supernatural, or the extraterrestrial?

PB: All of that and more. We are taking quite a relaxed "umbrella" approach to our definition or categorisation of what is "paranormal". We are being serious and scientific, with a strong emphasis on data and proof, while also having fun.

FT: Where do you stand on the paranormal? Any personal experiences?

PB: I don't believe that strange stuff happens, I *know* that strange stuff happens, and I find that intensely fascinating. I always have, ever since I was a small kid obsessed with ghost stories. I have had experiences. The most significant was after my mother died, when I was 14. I began to hear musical chiming sounds in the air, like oriental finger cymbals. This only happened when I was alone at night in our tiny flat in the east end of Glasgow, after my postman father had gone to bed. It happened with astonishing frequency, and stranger still it followed me from flat to flat when I went to university and then into work. Again, it only happened when I was alone at night. It gradually faded when I was in my 30s. The house we now live in is haunted by the previous owner, but he has been much less active for a while now.

In September 2012 my wife and I saw some very strange, pulsing lights a mile or two away over the Conic Hill, which is on the other side of the loch from where we live. It is an area where two close friends clearly saw at close quarters a cigar-shaped, silver, metallic UFO hovering in a field, before disappearing in an instant. I have become very interested in ufology in recent years. There is just too much evidence to discount a phenomenon that is happening all over the world, and which has astronomical implications for all of humanity.

FT: Given your film connections, what's your favourite paranormal themed movie?

PB: *Blood on Satan's Claw*, a Tigon picture directed by Piers Haggard in 1970. It stars Patrick Wymark as a kind of good witchfinder general, and tells the story of a village taken over by demonic possession in 17th century England. More than any other movie, apart from perhaps *Citizen Kane,* it made me realise how powerful entertainment could be, and by extension it made me want to be a filmmaker.

The Scottish Paranormal Festival takes place in Stirling between 31 October and 2 November, 2014.
Full event details:
www.paranormalscotland.com

STONES IN THE CITY

Why is there a megalithic circle in the middle of a half-demolished Glasgow housing estate? Who created it, and why? **JOHN REPPION** talks to Duncan Lunan about the rise and fall of one of modern Scotland's strangest public building projects: the Sighthill Stone Circle.

It is the eve of the festival of *Alban Hefin* and we are in the ancient Celtic land of Alba, the twilit evening air thick with fragrant incense. A troop of pagans gathers within a megalithic circle, a quintet of cowled figures standing before them. Now, they say, is the time when the Sun God is at the apex of his powers, crowned by the Goddess as the King of Summer. After tonight his strength will gradually wane, day by day, until the festival of *Alban Arthan* when the Holly King shall take his crown. This is the Summer Solstice and the faithful are gathered here upon hallowed ground to mark the turning of the Wheel of the Year. The year in question is 2013 and the specific location within Alba (or Scotland as the vast majority of us know it) is Sighthill Park in urban Springburn, northern Glasgow.

Built between 1964 and 1969, the Sighthill Housing Estate originally spanned two different sites: Pinkston to the south and Fountainwell to the north. While Fountainwell was built on former farmland, the Pinkston homes were erected on the dumping ground of Saint Rollox Chemical Works, once the largest such works in Europe. Sighthill consisted of 10 20-storey tower blocks – five in Pinkston and five in Fountainwell – seven five-storey maisonette blocks, and five rows of tenements.

Following decades of under-occupancy, letting was suspended in the Fountainwell side of Sighthill in 2005 and the housing subsequently demolished in 2008-9. The final two Sighthill tower blocks are currently under demolition, their last few remaining south-facing windows looking out over nearby Sighthill Park with its resident Stone Circle.

THE FINAL TWO TOWER BLOCKS ARE DUE FOR DEMOLITION

JOHN GILMOUR

Sighthill Park was officially opened in 1982, at which point it was the largest park created in the Glasgow area for a century.[1] Overlooked by the M8 Motorway, it covers the slopes of Broomhill, whose modest summit rises a mere 223ft (68m).[2] Sighthill Stone Circle was already there upon the hill, of course; the park was laid out around those weatherworn megaliths whose origin and purpose is now surely lost in the mists of antiquity. If only we could speak to those who placed the stones. If only we could ask them about their intentions and their methods.

Well, as it turns out, it's actually pretty easy to shoot them off an email.

A VERY SPECIAL PROJECT

Duncan Lunan is a Scottish writer, researcher, broadcaster, editor, critic, and tutor. He is also the author of over 900 articles and papers, and several books, including *The Stones and the Stars: Building Scotland's Newest Megalith* (Springer, 2012).[3] As head of the Glasgow Parks Astronomy Project from 1978, Duncan was one of the key people responsible for the erection of Sighthill Stone Circle – reputedly the first astronomically aligned stone circle constructed in Britain in 3,000 years. He kindly explained to me how this unlikely project came about.

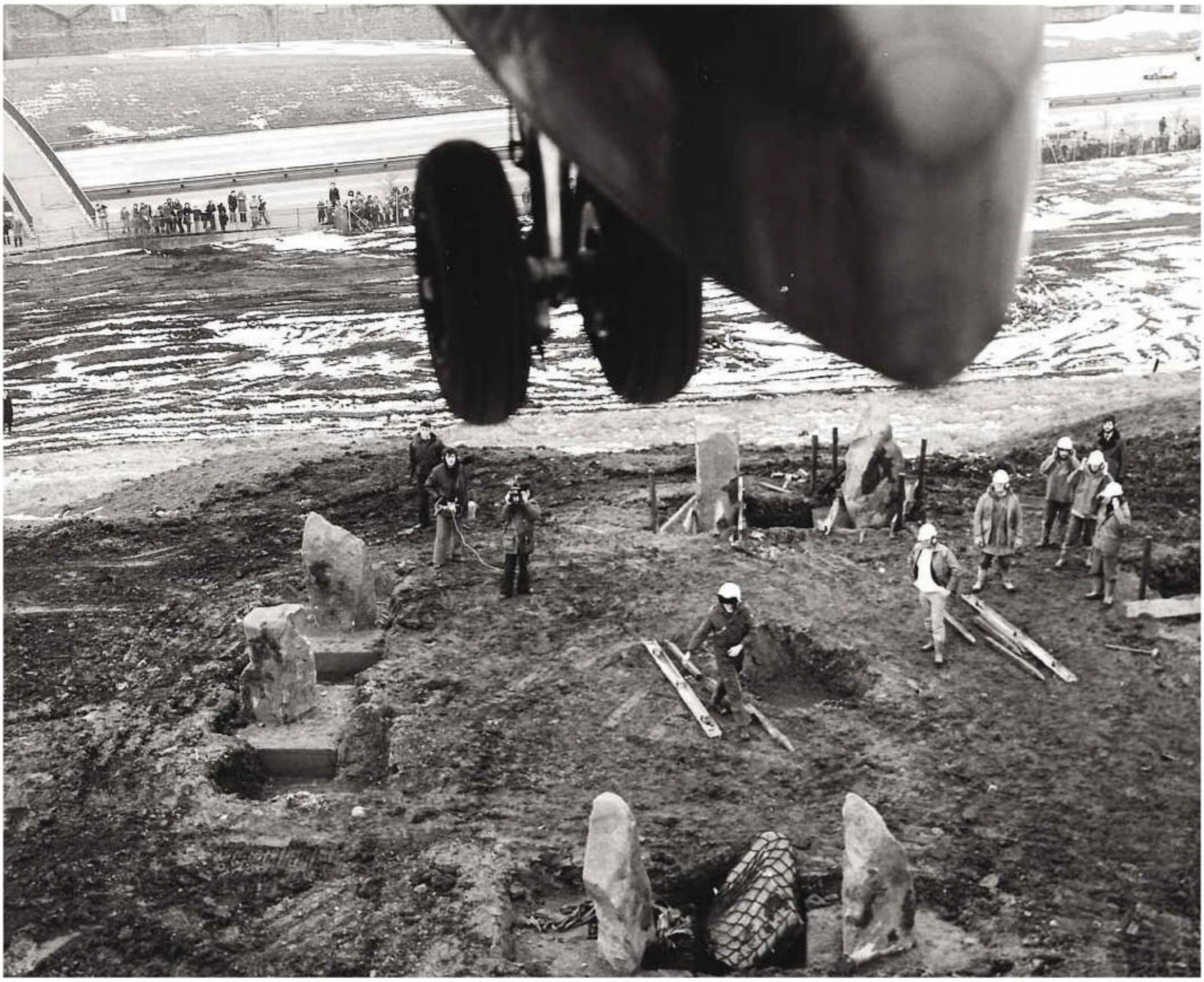
"In the late 1970s, in response to the success of the Scottish National Party's 'It's Scotland's Oil' campaign, the Labour government launched the Jobs Creation Scheme, which was supposed to show oil revenues being put back into Scotland. All projects were to be non-profit; no permanent jobs were to be created, nothing must compete with any jobs that trade unionists might hold. The money could not be spent on one regular activity, or set of activities; there had to be Special Projects as well. Glasgow was offered four million pounds in the expectation that it wouldn't be used. However, Glasgow has more parkland per head of population than any other city in Europe. The Parks Department was non-profit, and the workforce was mostly temporary, seasonal and non-unionised."

A range of imaginative ideas for Special Projects was put forward, including a vague notion of something to do with astronomy. Ken Naylor – the man in charge of Parks Special Projects – knew nothing about astronomy, but had the idea of asking

ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Duncan Lunan at Sighthill Stone Circle in 1979 and 2010. **OPPOSITE TOP:** Major standstill Moonrise over Sighthill.

MARK RUNNACLES

LINDA LUNAN



ROYAL NAVY

ABOVE: 'Helicopter Day' 1979: Crowds gather to watch a Royal Navy Sea King deliver the last seven stones of the circle to their new North Glasgow home.

local school children to submit their ideas to a competition. The winning entry was a plan to build a celestially aligned facsimile of a Stonehenge-like monument in one of Glasgow's parks.

"When I took on the job," Lunan continues, "I had to point out that a copy of an ancient site in modern Glasgow wouldn't work. The Earth's axis has shifted by half a degree since the Neolithic and precession of the equinoxes has altered star alignments still more. The azimuths of horizon events are specific for the latitude of each site, and the markers still have to be oriented to where those events occur on the actual horizon at each site. To build a working, astronomically aligned monument, I would have to find a site and then design a monument for it according to the ancient principles. Once I had convinced the Parks Department and the Manpower Services Commission of that, I proposed that we drop the modern materials and build the monument in stone."

So, how did today's Sighthill Park come to be the location of the stone circle?

"I was introduced to Ronnie Gray, the Principal Landscape Architect for the city, and after I explained to him what was needed, he got out a big Ordnance Survey map and marked out 18 possible sites. The first one I went to was the Broomhill in what is now Sighthill Park. As soon as I climbed up to the hilltop I realised that it was ideal, with a virtually perfect natural horizon all round, hardly broken even by buildings. It just couldn't be bettered.

"It was one of three hills: Broomhill, Summerhill and Sighthill. Later I discovered that Midsummer Solstice fairs had been held on the Summerhill until stopped by the church in the 17th century, and from the Summerhill, the midsummer Sun rises over the Sighthill. It's known that the Cathedral was built on an ancient site, and from there, the old road of Dobbie's Loan runs to the base of the Summerhill, right along the line of midsummer sunset. It then turns west, and meets the Clyde at a site called Knappers, where a huge Neolithic structure was excavated in the 1930s.[4] The best location for the circle turned out to be at the highest point in the park, overlooking the city centre, which the architects had been saving for a viewpoint."

MIDSUMMER SOLSTICE FAIRS HAD BEEN HELD ON SUMMERHILL

HELICOPTER DAY

In the spring of 1979 the children of Sighthill found themselves with an unexpected day off school – "helicopter day" as it came to be remembered – as crowds gathered to watch the bizarre spectacle of a Royal Navy Sea King placing the last seven of the 18 whinstone stones, from Beltmoss quarry in Kilsyth, in their new North Glasgow home.[5] Lunan had designed the circle as a functioning scientific instrument, and dedicated it to four experts in archæoastronomy – Professor Alexander Thom, Dr Archie Thom, Dr Euan Mackie, and Professor Archie Roy – all of whom were closely connected with Glasgow.

"All four had come under severe criticism and even abuse from archæologists, who insisted that there was no society in Neolithic Britain capable of such sophisticated measurement and construction. Euan MacKie was the exception – an archæologist who believed Neolithic society could have been analogous to the Maya culture on which he was an expert – and he had undertaken digs which verified some of Thom's deductions about the uses of ancient sites. For this, all four of them were regularly being described in the scientific press and the media with such terms as 'madmen', 'lunatics', 'profoundly ignorant of the archæological facts', and 'no better than Erich von Däniken'. Professor Glyn Daniel, the Editor of *Antiquity*, was particularly outspoken. But even then there was evidence that they were right, and there is now so much evidence for an advanced, pan-European Neolithic culture that apologies to the Thoms, Roys and MacKies seem overdue. From what I can gather, however, it's still more than any archæologist's job is worth to say they were right.

"The blow I planned to strike was to build a structure in which every feature was matched in some ancient site, and then prove that it functioned as an observatory, so we could say to the critics, 'Now, where is the difference?' We succeeded completely in that, and it is fair to say that, so far, nobody has taken a blind bit of notice!

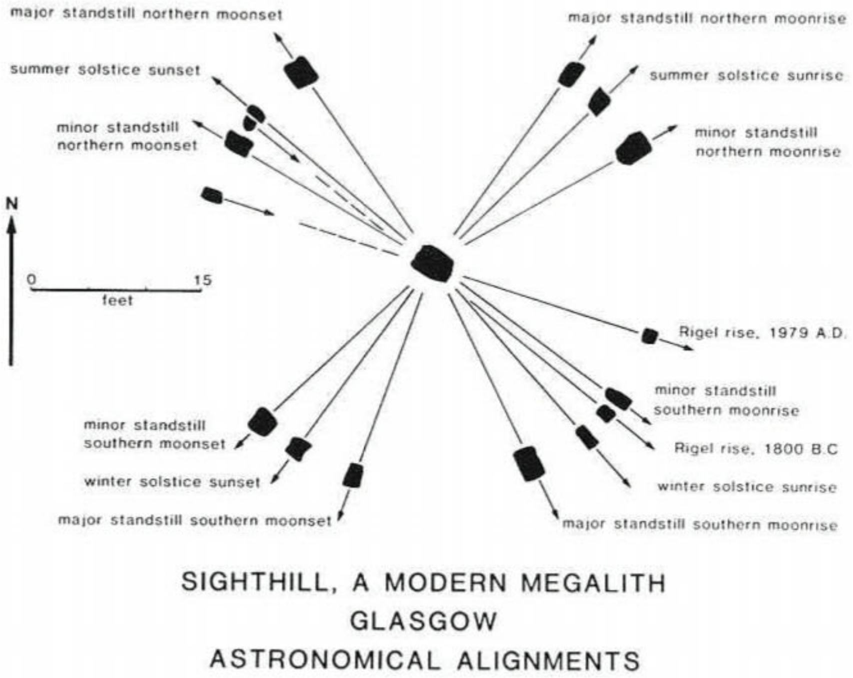
"The circle marks sunrise and sunset at the solstices, and moonrise and set at the major and minor standstills, every 18.6 years. I also included a star alignment to Rigel [the brightest star in the constellation Orion and the seventh brightest star in the night sky], partly for a link to Callanish [6] but also to provide future archæoastronomers with a date for its construction, thinking it would be there for 5,000 years at least!"

Back in May 1979 the circle was nearing completion with 18 stones in place and just the final landscaping still to be done. And then Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government came into power.

"Six days after the election," recalls Lunan, "I remember our shop steward coming in and saying that he had just heard Thatcher on the radio: '*We shall be restoring full employment by the end of 1980 and there will be no more nonsense like the Glasgow Parks astronomy project'.* [7]

"The shock was that we were ordered not to erect the last four stones, oversee landscaping the circle into the park, put up identifying plaques or produce the leaflet which had been commissioned by the Tourist Board. Everything was to stop, because the whole of Special Projects would be wound up, putting 100 or more people summarily back on the dole unless we guaranteed that there would be no more construction. And there never has been."

Incomplete and unsignposted, the circle


major standstill northern moonset
summer solstice sunset
minor standstill northern moonset
N
0
15
feet
major standstill northern moonrise
summer solstice sunrise
minor standstill northern moonrise
Rigel rise, 1979 A.D.
minor standstill southern moonrise
Rigel rise, 1800 B.C
winter solstice sunrise
major standstill southern moonrise
minor standstill southern moonset
winter solstice sunset
major standstill southern moonset
SIGHTHILL, A MODERN MEGALITH
GLASGOW
ASTRONOMICAL ALIGNMENTS

DAVE MCCLYMONT

JOHN GILMOUR

TOP: A diagram showing the circle's astronomical alignments. Lunan designed it to be a functioning observatory, validating the idea of an advanced Neolithic culture.
ABOVE: A 1979 view, looking east: the newly-erected stone circle contrasts strikingly with the modern tower block developments visible in all directions.

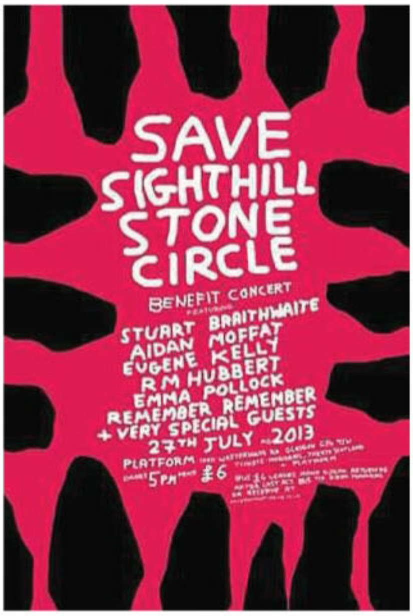
never became the tourist attraction and educational feature it was designed to be. Indeed, it wasn't long before Lunan heard that its origin had already passed into the realm of folklore: "It was believed to have been built by the Druids, and the local children were afraid of it."

Over the next three decades, in between numerous other projects, Lunan tried time and again to secure the funding and support necessary to complete Sighthill Stone Circle. Then, in 2012, he was informed by the city's Development and Regeneration Services that Sighthill Park and its resident circle were to be razed in order to create an Athletes Village for the 2018 Youth Olympic Games which Glasgow was bidding to host.

"In the initial confrontation with Development & Regeneration Services," he explains, "one question I couldn't answer at first was 'How many people go there? How many people use it?' It turns out that a great many people do go there, for many different purposes: some just for exercise or for peace and quiet, but many for spiritual purposes, including many different religions. Quite a number of families have scattered the ashes of their loved ones there; one that I did know about maintains a Christian memorial to their mother by the central stone. But it turns out that Druid and Pagan groups have quietly been using the circle for rituals, and it's from that community that the organised support for saving the circle has come."

SAVING THE CIRCLE

Almare Merille is a Glasgow native. She is also a practising Pagan, and one of the aforementioned cowled figures who stood among the stones at last year's Solstice ritual. "Within the Glasgow area there is a thriving and active Pagan community, serving all the various paths from Vodun to Shinto," she explains. "We are very lucky in the history that surrounds us, but also in the reservoir of personal knowledge and experience that is open to us. And of course this area is steeped in magic and mystery.



DAVID SHRIGLEY

PAGAN GROUPS HAVE BEEN QUIETLY USING THE CIRCLE FOR THEIR RITUALS

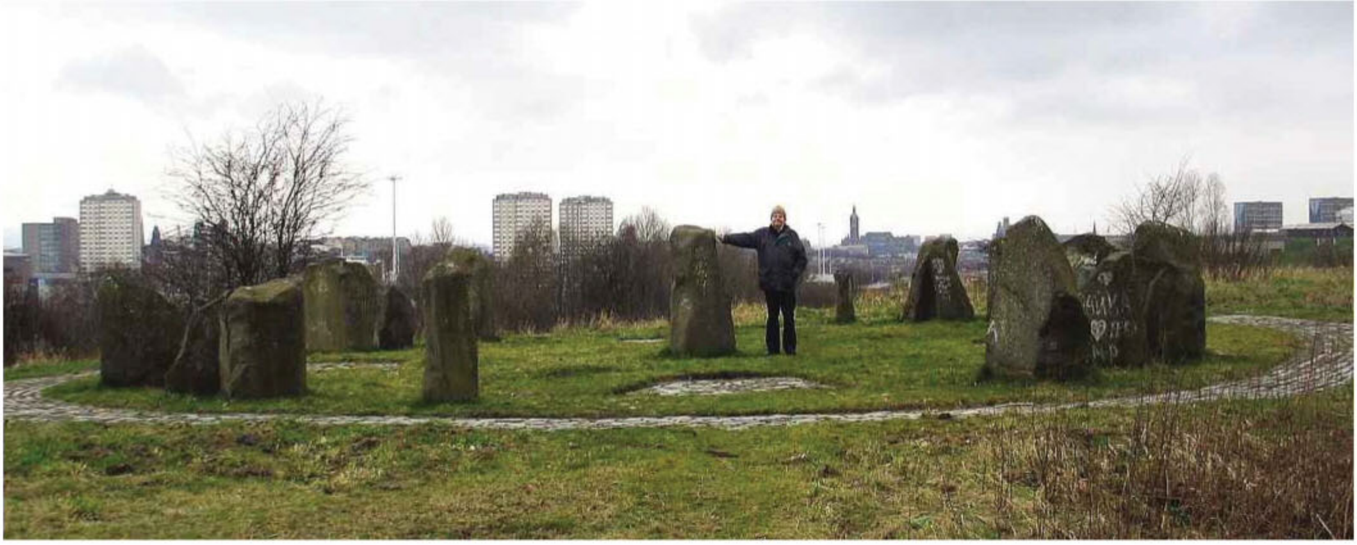
"We had planned for maybe 30 participants [for the Summer Solstice ritual]. We ended up with over 70 – at which point panic set in over the amount of cake and juice we would need. At one point in the ritual we planned to call the Awen [8] to raise the energy for what was to come. So, the five of us stood round the centre stone, pinky to pinky, and the participants surrounded us, touching us and their neighbours and forming one complete circuit. Anyone who took part – Pagan or not – felt the power of that call. Quite a few were openly emotional. The circle has welcomed us completely."

The public ritual was just one of a number of events designed to raise awareness of the stones and of their proposed fate at the hands of Glasgow City Council. A Save Sighthill Stone Circle benefit concert took place on 27 July 2013, organised by Stuart Braithwaite of post-rock legends *Mogwai* [9]. Despite these and many other efforts, including an online petition signed by close to 5,000 people and support for the campaign from the likes of Astronomer Royal for Scotland Professor John Brown, Sighthill Park is still earmarked for "re-positioning". There will be no Athletes Village (the city having lost out to Buenos Aires in their Youth Olympic bid), but Glasgow City Council now have plans for new houses, shops, hotels, and so on in the area, which is a mere 10 minutes walk from the city centre.

Public support for, and interest in, Sighthill

CHRIS LESLIE

ABOVE: Almare Merille and other Glasgow Pagans perform a ritual at Sighthill during the 2013 Winter Solstice. **BELOW:** Poster for a benefit concert to raise awareness.


LINDA LUNAN

ABOVE: Duncan Lunan stands within the Sighthill Stone Circle in 2012. There's now a chance that the stones will be stored and recreated at another site.

Stone Circle has never been higher, however, and it seems that Glasgow City Council have had to make some concessions. A report issued by their Planning Applications Committee on 8 April 2014 states: "If the Stone Circle is to be knocked down then every effort should be made that a suitable project with a similar monument using the materials should be constructed in close proximity taking into consideration the educational and religious elements of the original structure to preserve as a feature of interest… A condition has been attached for the Stone Circle elements to be stored within the application site for safekeeping until a future site can be identified to replace it."

Duncan Lunan explains "[This is] the first time the documentation relating to it has included mention of retaining the stones. We're in agreement with the architect on approximately where the circle will be recreated. There is still no date for the removal of the stones from their present site. They will probably be removed at an early stage once work begins, but a lot of issues with the redevelopment have to be settled before that happens.

"Right now I'm starting to focus on the upcoming lunar minor standstill, the only event marked at the circle but not yet documented photographically. The standstill is in September-October 2015,[10] but to the accuracy of the circle, a year either side of it would suffice for observations. I'm starting to plan on the assumption that we might begin observations this autumn at the present site and capture some or all of them before the stones are moved. It won't be possible to start specific observations at the new site until we know exactly where the circle will be, so at the moment everything is up in the air until the architects have more news for us."

For now, Sighthill Stone Circle remains in its original position; overlooked by the remaining tower blocks condemned to death by wrecking ball and bulldozer. There, among the post-industrial urban landscape, Duncan Lunan and the Glasgow Parks Astronomy Project re-created a marvel of ancient technology that experts of the day argued could never have existed. All of Clarke's Three Laws appear entirely pertinent here, but the oft-quoted final one seems to me the most significant: "Any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic."

With warm thanks to Almare Merille, and especially to Duncan Lunan for all his help.

For more on the story of Sighthill, see Duncan Lunan, *The Stones and the Stars: Building Scotland's Newest Megalith*, Springer 2012.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY

JOHN REPPION is a Liverpool-based author. His recent work can be found in *Cthulhu Lives!* (Ghostwoods Books, 2014), *In the Company of Sherlock Holmes* (Pegusus Books, 2014), and the galaxy's greatest comic, *2000 AD*.

NOTES

1 www.glasgow.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=5750

2 www.scottish-places.info/features/featurefirst19856.html

3 www.duncanlunan.com/bio.asp

4 Knappers (as in flint knappers) is a Neolithic and Bronze Age site uncovered 1933-4, including 34 burials – some cremations, some inhumation burials and some under cairns. The doorway of an enclosed spiral stone structure at the centre points to Midsummer Solstice sunset. It was surrounded by a ring of postholes, suggesting a lintelled structure like a wooden counterpart of the Stonehenge III trilithons; and around this was a huge structure of postholes, surrounded in turn by outlying standing stones with astronomical alignments. The outer wooden structure might have been a wooden henge, but the posts were small, and the chief excavator interpreted them as marking out a labyrinth with concealed astronomical alignments. See Ludovic Mann, "The Druid Temple Explained", William Rudge & Co., Glasgow & Edinburgh, 1939; www.templum.freeserve.co.uk/history/prehistory/bronzeage.htm.

5 http://theurbanprehistorian.wordpress.com/2013/04/24/thatchers-petrified-children/

6 The Callanish Stones, erected sometime between 2900 and 2600 BC and situated near the village of Callanish in the Western Isles of Scotland.

7 www.theguardian.com/uk/scotland-blog/2013/jan/18/glasgow-sighthill-stones

8 "(Poetic) inspiration" or "essence", "the breath of the divine" in modern Druidry (see www.wightdruids.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=124&Itemid=139).

9 The Glasgow Parks Astronomy Project ran from March 1978 to early 1980. Duncan Lunan was Project Manager and Stuart Braithwaite's late father, the telescope maker John Braithwaite, was Technical Supervisor. Stuart's grandfather, the late Bill Braithwaite, joined the Project as Model Maker in 1979, as part of an expanded team working on exhibitions and with schools.

10 Because the Earth's axis is inclined at 23.5° (currently) to the plane of its orbit (the Ecliptic), the Moon's orbit is inclined at 5° to the Ecliptic, and the Moon's orbital plane swings round the sky in 18.61 years under the pulls of the Sun and the Earth's equatorial bulge, the northerly and southerly maximum risings and settings of the Moon vary over an 18.61 year cycle (regression of the lunar nodes). The extreme northerly and southerly risings and settings, 14 days apart, are termed the major standstill, and the intermediate ones 9.3 years later are the minor standstill. Because the 18.61 year cycle is not commensurate with the solar year, standstills can occur at any time of the year and are not linked to the solstices as many people suppose. See EC Krupp, ed., *In Search of Ancient Astronomies*, Chatto & Windus, 1979; Duncan Lunan, *The Stones and the Stars*, Springer, 2012.)

The Fortean Times Random Dictionary of the Damned

compiled by the Hierophant's Apprentice

No 57: ABDUCTION BY ALIENS PART TWO

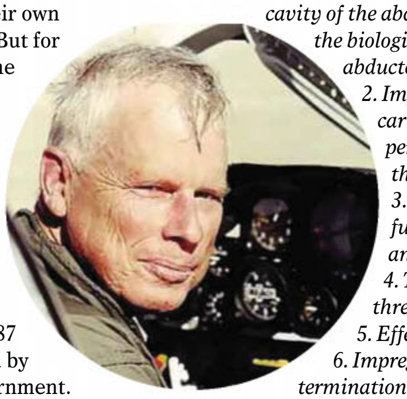
At the end of part one of this entry (**FT316:46-49**), we left the alien-abduction scenario as it had developed up to about 1989. It's worth repeating that the scenario *did* develop, as 'serious ufologists' have grudgingly acknowledged from time to time, although few seemed to realise that they had grown to accept as normative ideas that a few years previously they would have rejected in the time it takes to crack a bottle and take the first swig of beer. Nonetheless, it seemed to 'serious ufologists' that abductions had been shown to display a pattern that indicated the phenomenon was genuine. Sceptics had their own bible on the subject, written by Philip J Klass. But for the vast bemused mass of those engrossed by the subject and inclined to swallow it more or less whole, revelations were coming thick and fast that year.

Just blame the government

The excitement had started a couple of years previously when John Lear, an airline pilot and son of the designer/inventor of the Learjet 'executive' mini-airliner, startled readers of the ParaNet bulletin board on 29 December 1987 with the news that people were being abducted by aliens with the express consent of the US Government. According to Lear: "On April 30, 1964, the first communication between these aliens and the US Government took place at Holloman Air Force Base in New Mexico. Three saucers landed at a prearranged area and a meeting was held between the aliens and intelligence officers of the US Government." So far, so unexpected, for the wing-ding wing of UFO 'researchers'. But Lear knew what others didn't:

> *During the period of 1969-1971, MJ-12 representing the US Government made a deal with these creatures, called EBE's (Extraterrestrial Biological Entities, named by Detley Bronk, original MJ-12 member and 6th President of Johns Hopkins University). The 'deal' was that in exchange for 'technology' that they would provide to us, we agreed to 'ignore' the abductions that were going on and suppress information on the cattle mutilations. The EBE's assured MJ-12 that the abductions (usually lasting about two hours) were merely the ongoing monitoring of developing civilisations.*
> *In fact, the purposes for the abductions turned out to be:*
> *1. The insertion of a 3mm spherical device through the nasal cavity of the abductee into the brain. The device is used for the biological monitoring, tracking, and control of the abductee.*
> *2. Implementation of Posthypnotic Suggestion to carry out a specific activity during a specific time period, the actuation of which will occur within the next two to five years.*
> *3. Termination of some people so that they could function as living sources for biological material and substances.*
> *4. Termination of individuals who represent a threat to the continuation of their activity.*
> *5. Effect genetic engineering experiments.*
> *6. Impregnation of human females and early termination of pregnancies to secure the crossbreed infant.*

There was much more about the machinations of MJ-12, crashed-saucer stories, how Jesus of Nazareth was created by the aliens, and the problems EBEs had with their digestion (solved by way of cattle mutilations; no Gaviscon in those days). The 'Lear Statement', as it became known, was actually a mish-mash of various unfounded tales, rumours and hoaxes that had been floating around the edges of ufology for some years. In due



ABOVE: John Lear proposed the government was in on the abductions act.

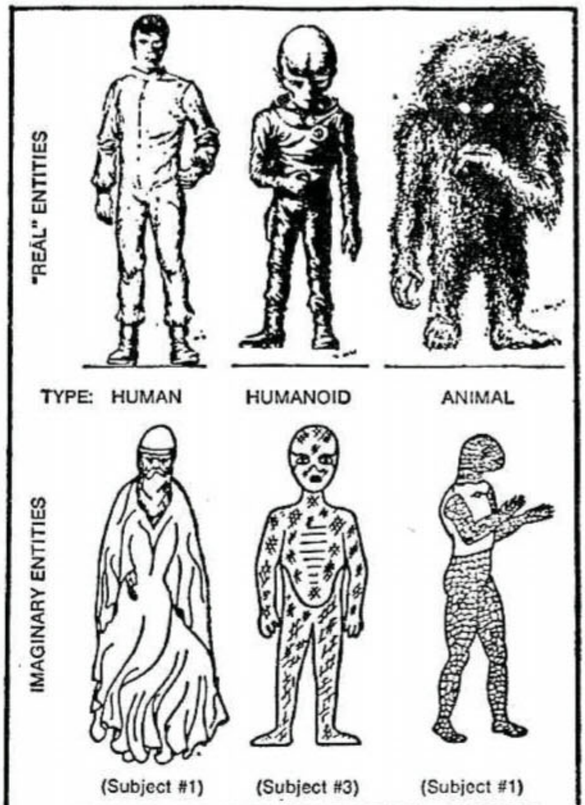


FIGURE 2—"REAL" AND IMAGINARY ENTITY TYPES.

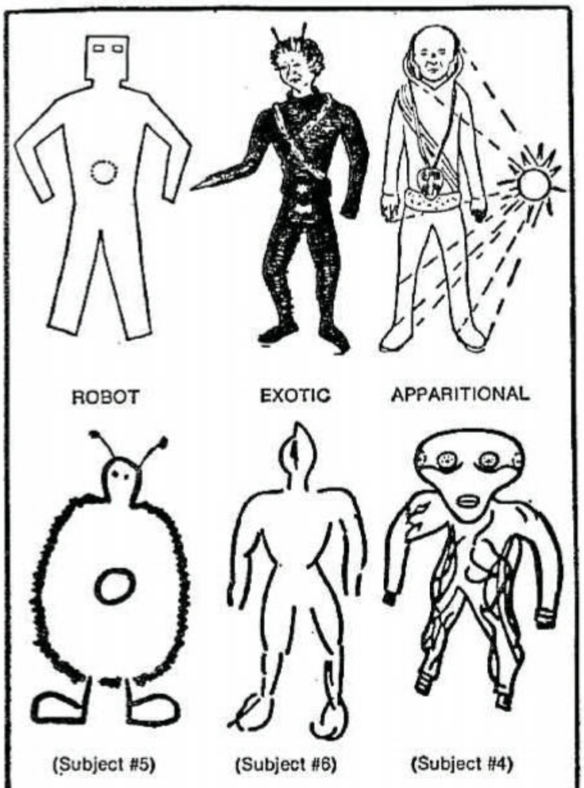


FIGURE 3—"REAL" AND IMAGINARY ENTITY TYPES.

ABOVE: Not just your boring old Greys – some of the various entities reported in Herrera, Lawson and McCall's 'imaginary abductees' experiment.

course a whole complex of legends and lies was elaborated from it, and the resulting byzantine conspiracy brew became known as 'Darkside Ufology', whose chief, and most extravagant, exponent was Bruce Alan Walton, *alias* Branton. A key inspiration was a series of regressions that had been conducted by Dr Leo Sprinkle way back in 1980 with one Myrna Hansen (presumably a pseudonym: anyway certainly *not* the lovely Miss USA of 1953). This in turn was entangled in the Paul Bennewitz affair, one of the founding legends of the Darkside, and exposed as a scam – which had had tragic consequences – by William Moore, also in 1989. But that year too saw publication of Linda Moulton Howe's *An Alien Harvest*. Tagged in an *FT* review as "one of ufology's most unhinged books", this hefty and very expensive tome contained one gem: complete transcripts of Dr Sprinkle's hypnosis sessions with Ms Hansen.

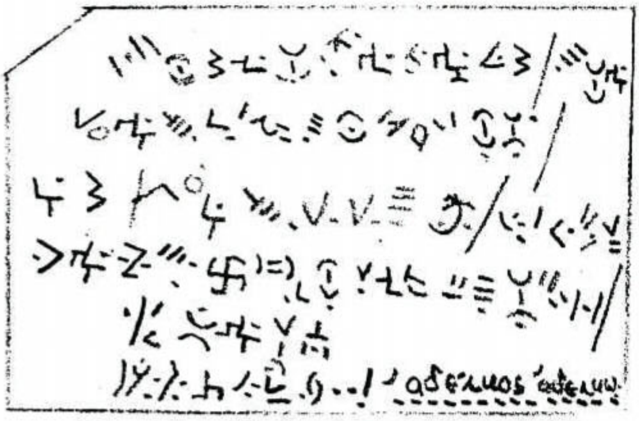
According to the account usually offered, she was driving home on a road near Cimarron, New Mexico, one evening in the Spring of 1980, when she and her six-year-old son saw five UFOs descending into a cow pasture. She had confused memories of a close encounter, and could not account for a period of 'missing time' of some four hours. Under hypnosis, she said that two white-suited figures emerged from one of the UFOs and proceeded to mutilate one of the cows in the field. She remonstrated with the aliens, and she and her son were captured and taken to separate ships. She continued to resist but was forcefully undressed and given a physical examination, including a vaginal probe. Then a tall, jaundiced human appeared and apologised and ordered the aliens punished. He then took Ms Hansen on a tour of the UFO, which apparently took flight. She was next led out into a landscape that at one point she believed she recognised as being west of Las Cruces, and at another had the impression was near Roswell. Here she was taken into an underground base, where she managed to escape from her captors briefly. She found herself in a room full of vats in which were floating human body parts, including an arm with a hand attached to it. Ms Hansen was dragged out of this area, and she and her son were both put through a further painful process involving loud noises and blinding lights, before being taken back aboard the UFO and flown (with her car) back to the site of the abduction.

The plot thickens

Read the transcripts, however, and you will find a far more fragmentary, disjointed account than this: it is more a set – barely even a series – of images, with none of the narrative coherence of the received version. So where did this seamless *reported* sequence of events come from? One possible culprit is Dr Sprinkle, perhaps with help in conscious discussion from Ms Hansen; another is Ms Howe. Sprinkle's questioning is not often blatantly leading, but neither is it wholly un-suggestive. Ms Howe believes in many unlikely things, and besides is a journalist: stories are her *métier*. Whatever the truth, the Hansen transcripts throw into relief two crucial aspects of how we understand the abduction 'phenomenon': first, the rôle of the investigator-hypnotist in shaping the abductee's experience as he or she recounts it (or creates it) and, second, the filtering, editing and arrangement of whatever's said under hypnosis into a coherent 'report' that is offered to the public.

This point was made by Klass in *UFO Abductions: A Dangerous Game*, who added that if you wanted to meet horrid aliens then Messrs Hopkins and Jacobs would supply them, whereas Dr Sprinkle always seemed to elicit benign ones (Myrna Hansen's case was perhaps the exception that proved the rule). Thomas Bullard eventually countered the contention with a study called *The Sympathetic Ear* (FUFOR, 1995), whose logic and methodology in turn was taken roundly to pieces in a privately-circulated paper, *A Tin Ear*, by Houston lawyer Jeffrey B King (1997). As an example of how the data are (depending on your point of view) either distorted or incomplete, we might note that none of Budd Hopkins's subjects reported much by way of life-changing experiences in the aftermath to an abduction – recurrent themes here being the acquisition of psychic powers, environmental awareness, or a radical change of diet and way of life. We have it on good authority that Hopkins simply never enquired about this aspect of 'his' abductees' experience. Another example of alleged uniformity that falls apart under scrutiny is Hopkins's claim that

TOPFOTO / FORTEAN PICTURE LIBRARY



ABOVE LEFT: Note with message in alien writing found at UFO landing site by Robert Milcher of Tampa, Florida. **ABOVE RIGHT**: The Alla-gash abductees.

'his' abductees reported (that is, drew) alien writing consistently. In fact, some did, but many did not; and the consistent writing was markedly different from what other researchers' subjects have reported. Gary Anthony, who with Mark Newbrook has been collecting such scripts as part of their Alien Semiotics Project, remarks that: "A common letter form is the S with dots"—exactly the kind of thing Hopkins was setting such store by—"and these are spontaneously generated when you ask someone to make up a script from angels/aliens etc without any reference..." He also told us: "Mario Pazzaglini discovered that a lot of these samples had a passing resemblance to Gregg Shorthand at best."

At different times, one abductee produced at least two ferociously different versions of the script she had seen in a book given her by aliens. The abductee: none other than Betty Hill.

This raises obvious questions about the reliability of memory, which leads to the matter of how hypnosis may help someone *construct* a false memory of an alien encounter. We'll come back to that. Meanwhile, if one wants consistency in abduction accounts, one need look no further back than to 1977 – well before the homogenisation of abduction stories that we see today – to Herrera, Lawson and McCall's study of 'imaginary' abductees. The consistency here is in the types of entity reported and the details of their behaviour (subjects in the experiment had been given the bare bones of the abduction scenario, so they already had its much-vaunted narrative structure in their minds). The investigators' conclusion was that there was little significant difference between the accounts given by 'real' abductees and those who claimed no ufological experience or even reading. Needless to say, Lawson & Co's work was sedulously ignored (when not derided) by abductologists, who were preoccupied in refining their own mythology.

The story so far...

So: back in 1989, a template of the story that abductees were expected to tell, and a convention as to the nature and appearance of their abductors had emerged. It had also ramified into and contributed to conspiracy lore. Those less inclined to believe everything they hear could feel reasonably safe in doubting that things were really that simple. The emergence, and contestation, of claims of ritual satanic abuse (RSA) that were emerging at about this time tended to confirm sceptics in their doubts, for very similar techniques of 'memory retrieval' were used in extracting these accounts from troubled people as were used in abduction 'research'. And the accounts were, if it were possible, even less credible than those in the abduction literature.

Contestation is intrinsic to forteana: damned data attract dispute. The difference between claims of RSA and that people were being abducted was that people were being sent to jail as child-abusing (not to mention roasted-fœtus-eating) criminals, and on the flimsiest of evidence. The alien-abduction scenario was argued over within a minuscule and amateur subculture, and the whole business was largely regarded as slightly batty by outsiders. Not that belief in abductions was always harmless. With splendid *naïveté*, which some might call irresponsibility, Budd Hopkins reported in 1987 that:

> *My case files include three instances in which individuals – all males and apparently somewhat depressed to begin with – committed suicide after what were described by their friends and family as UFO abduction experiences. And there is more on this debit side of the ledger, including what seems to have been an accident following a car-stopping incident and abduction; the driver, the only surviving parent of four children, died later of complications suffered in this encounter. Two female abductees I've worked with either planned or carried out suicide attempts when they were 10 years old, and another recent attempt involves a frightened, despondent 14-year-old girl.*

Sceptics protested, but to no avail: there was no effective court of appeal outside ufology. With the RSA cases, in contrast, alert and enlightened psychiatrists realised that the reputation and integrity of their profession was at stake – it was never quite a matter of 'Never mind the injustices being perpetrated', although sometimes it looked as self-interested as that – and there were fundamental legal questions at stake. The result was massive research into the nature of memory and hypnotic recall, and a concerted campaign to bring errant therapists to book. As Dr Christopher Barden, in *Psychiatric Times* (June 2014), recalled, there were "prodigious efforts that put a stop to the RRM-MPD [repressed-recovered memory-multiple personality disorder] misadventure and brought important, lasting reforms to the US mental health system... Our national science allies investigated, published, reviewed, and testified about the science of memory and false memory, thus providing the valid and reliable science we needed to effectively educate juries, licensing boards, and the public." From 1995, a series of lawsuits followed, in which "international record-setting verdicts proved once and for all that citizen juries could fully comprehend – and would aggressively punish – experimental (unsupported by competent science) RRM-MPD 'treatments.' Jurors reported they found such therapy methods... to be reckless, abusive, and a violation of the patients' fundamental human right to control treatment by informed consent." By the end of 1997, the RRM-MPD 'industry' had fallen apart under the weight of damages awards ($10.6 million was the record-holder).

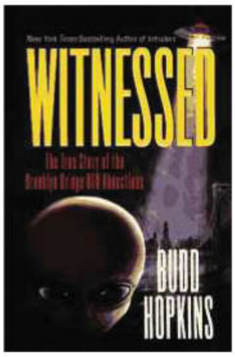
Abductologists, operating within the ufological bubble, blithely ignored the implications. In 1992 David Jacobs had published *Secret Life* and in 1994 John Mack published *Abduction: Human encounters with aliens.* Jacobs insisted in the one case that extraterrestrials were secretly interbreeding with humans—utilising methods that, when not blatantly implausible, were crude to say the least, by terrestrial standards. Mack said aliens were trying to tell us to be nice to one another and respect 'the environment'. Between these two came Raymond Fowler's account of four men being simultaneously abducted (*The Allagash Abductions*); Fowler had already made a name for himself in presenting the long history of Betty Andreasson's numerous abductions. All relied on hypnosis for their evidence, but neither they nor any other abduction investigator chose to qualify their findings in light of the exposure of the scandalous RRM movement. Their junk science was capped in September 1996 by

Budd Hopkins's *Witnessed*, an hilarious, labyrinthine yarn of how an innocent Manhattan housewife became entangled with aliens, the General Secretary of the United Nations, and his increasingly deranged bodyguards. With one of whom said housewife had (it turned out) for years been enjoying hanky-panky when meeting aboard UFOs in the company of aliens. Another strand of this fable had the heroine dubbed "Our Lady of the Sands", a kind of prophetess on behalf of the environment – although not a reliable one, as she revealed that crustaceans enjoyed a diet of basalt.

In 1998, David Jacobs managed to go yet one further with *The Threat*, which expanded on the 'alien breeding programme' at length. The blurb said it was "a disturbing picture of aliens integrating themselves into our society and relegating humans to an inferior status" involving "a bold plan to create a breed of alien-human 'hybrids' who will eventually colonise, and ultimately control the Earth." Jacobs said this would become apparent to all at some point in the "next five to 50 years", so we have a bit of time left. For some reason Jacobs's apocalyptic vision stirred remarkably little interest among ufologists.

Another tipping point

There have been many others besides Fowler, Hopkins, Mack and Jacobs who have investigated alien abductions, but these, along with Whitley Strieber, have probably been most influential in creating a stereotype for the abduction scenario. Some, such as Edith Fiore, whose findings didn't match the authorised version, were quietly ignored and written out of the history. But all, one way or another, can be traced back to the Betty and Barney Hill case. In an essay published in 2000, Hopkins said that he regarded the Hills' story as "a control in weighing the validity of subsequent hypotheses regarding the etiology of abduction accounts" – in other words, it remains the standard against which other accounts are judged, at least by abductologists. The trouble is that the plausibility of the Hill case is itself deeply problematic, as the essays in Pflock & Brookesmith's *Encounters at Indian Head* (2007) demonstrate. In that book, the late Marcello Truzzi remarked that rather than dwelling on the matters of its genuineness or authenticity, the psychosocial approach to the Hills's experience (and by implication any other abduction acccount) was the most promising.


New York Times Bestselling Author of Intruders
WITNESSED
The True Story of the Brooklyn Bridge UFO Abductions
BUDD HOPKINS

Taking that route, of course, allows one to step outside not only the arguments about whether abductions 'really happen' but also outside the rigid presumption that they can happen in only one approved manner. It's been as much a failing of hardline sceptics as of believers that there is one over-arching 'explanation' for abduction stories, which one could render down to a simplistic face-off between sleep paralysis and the extraterrestrial hypothesis. Psychosocial analysts have a good deal more than that in their armoury of (admittedly speculative) candidates for elucidation. They have also noticed that the accounts given by abductees themselves – of which there are now dozens of examples, online or privately published – are often a good deal weirder than the conventional or even agenda-driven reports offered by mainstream investigators. As Jeffrey B King remarked: "When tales of abduction are told by the actual percipients, the stories include extremely bizarre features, such as dead relatives accompanying the aliens, human abductors (especially military personnel) either in league with the aliens or alone, white gorillas, floating eight-foot penguins and encounters with Presidents, Jesus and Bigfoot."

REVEALING THE SECRET ALIEN AGENDA
THE THREAT
THE BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF SECRET LIFE
DAVID M. JACOBS, PH.D.

And as it happened – if 1998 was a high point for weirdness emanating from mainstream ufology (as in *The Threat*), it also marked the emergence of psychosocial commentary from the specialist periodicals where it had been brewing for years. Notable among the year's books were Peter Brookesmith's *Alien Abductions* and Terry Matheson's *Alien Abductions: Creating a Modern Phenomenon*, both of which looked at the possible underlying meanings of the experiences while taking their claims to veridicality apart. Matheson was particularly good at fingering leading questions and identifying the way investigators shaped the accounts they were seeking. And in the wider world, academics were beginning to take an interest in how abduction stories fitted into and reflected popular culture and preoccupations.

In the years that followed, the phenomenon itself became pluralistic again: aliens, according to the literature, began once more to come in all shapes and sizes. As for what they did to their captives, Martin Kottmeyer has observed:

> *Needles may be inserted into virtually any part of the body with a gratuitous absence of anæsthesia. All variety of mad-science horrors have imperilled abductees from eyes being pulled out and re-inserted, brains being removed and re-inserted, limbs being twisted, backs broken, being suffocated, being drowned, to sensations like being buried alive. Implants, mind scans, mind control, and information downloads are a recurring focus of attention. Weird sexual procedures have become central over time. Men often report sperm being acquired, though never in the same way twice.*

And so, almost making a full circle, things have gone on, as if we were in a 1970s time warp, but with conspiracy theories and New Age contactee-type 'wisdom' and imagery now a growing part of the mainstream.

How to look the other way

From 2007 on, one of David Jacobs's subjects, calling herself Emma Woods, began to detail her experiences at his hands, backing her account with audio extracts from hypnosis sessions, on her website. In late 2010, by way of a Paratopia podcast and a cover story in *UFO Magazine*, ufologists finally became aware of her story. Among many curious details, Ms Woods revealed that Jacobs had become convinced that the hybrids were after him. While she was hypnotised, he suggested she had multiple-personality disorder because he "believed that the 'hybrids/aliens' would read my mind, see that he had a new theory 'that everyone telling abduction stories was actually suffering from MPD', and that the 'hybrids/aliens' would therefore lose interest in him." Such paranoia notwithstanding, Jacobs persisted with constructing, via hypnosis, a sado-masochistic fantasy with Ms Woods as the hybrids' victim, during which he suggested she wear a chastity belt ("right where the vaginal opening is, it's got a couple of nails sticking across") and send him a pair of her used underpants for 'testing' (they remained untested).

Sceptics familiar with Jacobs's writings may have been shocked at this evidence of his methods and predilections but perhaps not entirely surprised (see **FT296:30-37**). The reaction of ufology-at-large was to gaze elsewhere. In January 2011, Carol Rainey, Budd Hopkins's ex-wife, decided to break silence on her experience of *his* questionable investigative techniques, in an article in *Paratopia* magazine, partly in support of Ms Woods, partly in reaction to Hopkins publicly defending Jacobs; not long after, she began posting video clips on YouTube to substantiate her account. The ufological good and great airily dismissed Ms Rainey as a 'scorned woman', and ignored Ms Woods's evidence in favour of stout defences of Hopkins's and Jacobs's sterling characters. There was, it seems, only so much reality the ufological establishment could bear. To add to the dismal catalogue, the much-vaunted Betty Andreasson-Luca saga had been denounced in 2007 by her stepson as a monstrous fraud, mostly perpetrated by Bob Luca influencing an impressionable Betty.

We will end on a comfortingly open-minded, fortean note. Maybe, for their own weird reasons, aliens are indeed abducting people. But the evidence as adduced by the leading proponents of that idea seems sadly weak – indeed, like them, it seems altogether sad. FT

ForteanTimes | **SUBSCRIPTION OFFER**

FREE ForteanTimes EXCLUSIVE MUG

when you subscribe

Your Phenomenal Offer

- Get your first **3 issues for £1** – if you're not completely satisfied, simply cancel during your trial period
- Exclusive **FREE Fortean Times** mug
- **SAVE up to 21%** on the shop price if you continue your subscription
- **FREE delivery to your door** before it hits the shops

For(tea)nTimes

SUBSCRIBE TODAY
quoting your offer code below

Call 0844 844 0049
Visit dennismags.co.uk/forteantimes
or complete and return the form below

THE WORLD'S WEIRDEST NEWS STORIES
ForteanTimes
THE BALDOON MYSTERY
REAL-LIFE SUPERHEROES
THE EX

ForteanTimes 3 TRIAL ISSUES ORDER FORM

☐ **YES! Please start my subscription to *Fortean Times* with 3 issues for £1 and send me my Exclusive Fortean Times mug for FREE.** I understand that the first 3 issues of *Fortean Times* I receive are on a no obligation trial basis. If I choose not to continue my subscription I will miss out on updates on the world of strange phenomena. The trial issues and FREE gift are mine to keep, whatever I decide.

OR ☐ I am an existing subscriber. Please extend my subscription with this offer.

YOUR DETAILS:

Mr/Mrs/Ms Forename
Surname
Address
Postcode
Telephone
Mobile
Email Year of birth

CHEQUE & CREDIT CARD PAYMENTS: £39.98 FOR 12 ISSUES (SAVE 21%)

1 ☐ I enclose a cheque made payable to Dennis Publishing Ltd.

2 ☐ Please charge my: ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ AMEX ☐ Debit/Maestro (issue no. ☐)

CARD NUMBER START DATE EXPIRY DATE

SIGNED TODAY'S DATE

DIRECT DEBIT PAYMENT: £19.99 every 6 issues (SAVE 21%) – UK ONLY

Dennis **Instruction to your Bank or Building Society to pay by Direct Debit** DIRECT Debit

Name and full postal address of your Bank or Building Society

To the manager: Bank name
Address
Postcode

Account in the name(s) of

Branch sort code

Bank/Building Society account number

Originator's Identification Number

7	2	4	6	8	0

Instructions to your Bank or Building Society
Please pay Dennis Publishing Ltd. Direct Debits from the account detailed in this instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Dennis Publishing Ltd. and, if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank/Building Society.

Signature(s)
Date

Banks and building societies may not accept Direct Debit instructions for some types of account

Dennis Publishing (UK) Ltd uses a layered Privacy Notice, giving you brief details about how we would like to use your personal information. For full details please visit our website **www.dennis.co.uk/privacy/** or call us on **0844 844 0053 or 01795 419 844.** If you have any questions please ask as submitting your details indicates your consent, until you choose otherwise, that we and our partners may contact you about products and services that will be of relevance to you via, direct mail, phone, email and SMS. You can opt-out at ANY time via **www.subsinfo.co.uk** or **privacy@dennis.co.uk** or **0844 844 0053 or 01795 419 844.**

Gifts limited to first 100 orders. Please allow 28 days for delivery. UK only.
This offer is limited to one offer per household

Return this order to: Freepost RLZS-ETGT-BCZR,
Fortean Times, 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park,
Sittingbourne ME9 8GU (NO STAMP REQUIRED)

OFFER CODE: P1411P

The Hunting of the Woggle

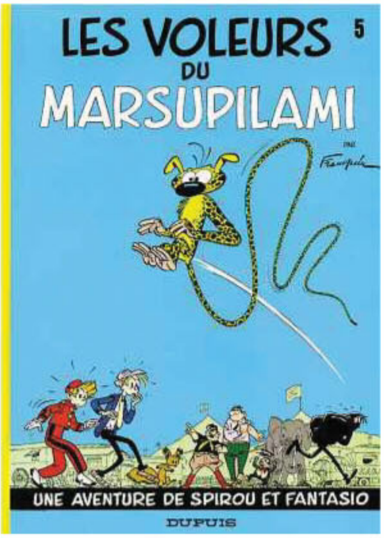
ROB GANDY traces his fascination with cryptozoological creatures back – via early comic reading and a walk in a Paris street – to its unlikely source...

ROB GANDY is a visiting professor at the Liverpool Business School, John Moores University. He has written for FT on Merseyside doppelgängers and ghostlore.

Like many forteans I sometimes wonder where and when I first read about particular fortean topics. I can, however, specify the origin of my cryptozoological interests: it was the hunt for the Woggle!

As a nine-year-old in 1960, my primary literary sources were comics, which I read voraciously. These included *Knockout*, featuring Sexton Blake and Billy Bunter. One long-running story starred *Dicky and Birdbath* – a chipper bellboy and reporter respectively.[1] In his will, Birdbath's uncle sets three challenges for him and his distinctly dodgy cousin, with the winner receiving the full inheritance. The first is to invent something original that will benefit mankind, and the second is to finish in the first six of a motor Grand Prix. Birdbath wins the first challenge with his cousin winning the second (by dubious means). The final and deciding challenge is to catch a living Woggle and give it to a zoo. Texts state that the Woggle is one of the greatest mysteries of nature, and although certain scientists consider it fictional, others state that it really does exist. Where might it live? In the small South American state of Palombia.

We see that a Woggle is a small, fearless and resourceful monkey-like creature, which is strong and intelligent and scares jaguars. It is red with black spots and about 3ft (90cm) high, but its tail is at least four times its height. The Woggle can use its tail to mimic a snake, as a lasso, and as a coiled spring that enables it to bounce through the jungle crying: "Wiggle! Waggle! Woggle! Wop! Wop! Wop!" Dicky and Birdbath eventually catch the Woggle by accident, as it lies comatose after getting drunk on their stove oil (perhaps Richard Freeman should try this when next seeking Orang Pendek).



LES VOLEURS DU MARSUPILAMI
5
Franquin
UNE AVENTURE DE SPIROU ET FANTASIO
DUPUIS

FRANQUIN/DUPUIS

Carrying the Woggle in a wooden cage, our heroes escape attacks by local natives with the help of their remorseful cousin, who decides to stay in the jungle. They make it back home and give the Woggle to the local zoo. Birdbath then discovers that his uncle was bankrupt and had set the challenges as character-building adventures for his nephews. The story ends with Dicky and Birdbath planning to free the Woggle from captivity. In the follow-on story they find that the Woggle has been stolen from the zoo, and their adventures include saving it from a circus before all is happily resolved.

I have occasionally sought copies of *Knockout* with the three characters on the Internet, but to no avail. So imagine my surprise and delight walking down a Paris street to see a huge Woggle before me! What mixed emotions – it wasn't a figment of my childhood imagination, but it was not all as I remembered: it wasn't red with black spots (it was yellow with black spots), and it didn't go "Wiggle! Waggle! Woggle! Wop! Wop! Wop!" (it went "Houba houba")! And it wasn't even a Woggle – it was a *Marsupilami*!

The *Marsupilami* was a large cardboard figure in a Comic Shop window. It transpires that *Dicky and Birdbath* was a franchised and translated usage of André Franquin's 1952 *Spirou and Fantasio* comic strips entitled *Spirou and the Heirs* and *The Marsupilami Robbers.*[2] The reason why the Woggle was red and black was that 1950s/1960s comics often relied on two colours for printing: black and red on a white background. Clearly, *Knockout* decided that "Marsupilami" was too difficult a name for English children and used up space in speech bubbles. What better name than "Woggle" – a silly-sounding object all children know for fastening the neckerchiefs of scouts and girl guides?

Franquin was a Belgian comics artist who worked on *Spirou and Fantasio* from 1947 to 1969; he used *Marsupilami* in many subsequent stories. The name is a portmanteau of the words *marsupial*, *Pilou-Pilou* (the French name for *Eugene the Jeep*, a character Franquin loved as a kid) and *ami*, French for *friend.* On leaving *Spirou and Fantasio* Franquin retained the rights to *Marsupilami,* although all other characters remained the property of the publisher. In 1987, Franquin launched the *Marsupilami* series, with a new publishing house and collaborators, which featured the Marsupilami family from *The Marsupilamis' Nest* (1957). Franquin died in 1997 but the series continued, drawn by Batem.

In 1993 Disney produced a series of 13 *Marsupilami* cartoons for television. Subsequently, in 2000, a new French-produced series more closely followed the character in the original comic. A fifth series is currently in production according to the *Marsupilami* website.[3]

The reason why the *Marsupilami* avoided my cryptozoological radar for so long is probably because, unlike *Asterix* and *Tin Tin*, the comic strips where it featured are not widely translated into English. This is a shame, as you can readily see that *Spirou and Fantasio* and *Marsupilami* involve a lot of great knockabout fun.

Clearly, *Marsupilami* is not real, but it is arguably one of the most widely recognised and best loved cryptozoological creatures in Europe.[4] For me personally, it serves to illustrate that we can draw our fortean inspirations from the unlikeliest of places. FT

NOTES

[1] www.26pigs.com/knockout/bibliography.html

[2] http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spirou_et_Fantasio

[3] www.marsupilami.com/

[4] There are translations into Dutch, German, Spanish, Portuguese and several Scandinavian languages.

Bowmen of Mons and Mars

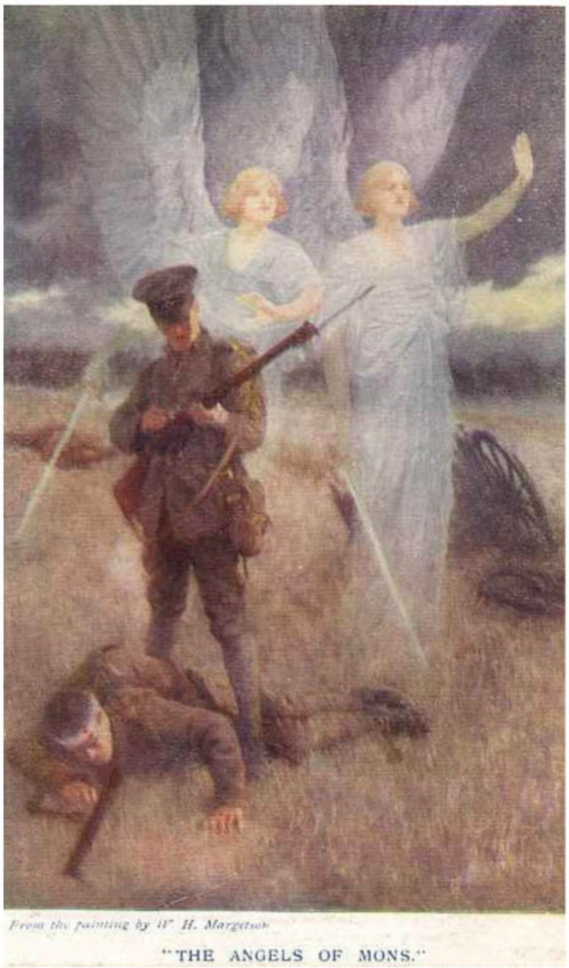
DAVID CLARKE ponders the origins of the phantom bowmen imagined by two fantasy authors at the outbreak of the First World War.

DAVID CLARKE is a regular columnist and contributor to *Fortean Times*. His latest book is *Britain's X-traordinary Files*, published by Bloomsbury on 25 September; it includes a chapter covering The Angels of Mons and other legends of World War I.

They were like men who drew the bow, and with another shout, their cloud of arrows flew singing and tingling through the air towards the German host…the singing arrows darkened the air; the heathen horde melted from before them.
Arthur Machen, *The Bowmen*, September 1914

….our giant minds…defend us, sending out legions of imaginary warriors to materialise before the mind's eye of the foe. They see them – they see their bows drawn back – they see their slender arrows speed with unerring precision toward their hearts. And they die – killed by the power of suggestion.
Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Thuvia: Maid of Mars*, 1916

One hundred years ago the great European powers were drawn into the first war to be fought on a truly global scale. Four years of conflict produced an outpouring of literature and art, and many caught up in the carnage found sustenance in religion and other types of supernatural belief. There were national calls to prayer and the notion of 'God With Us' encouraged the idea that troops had divine protection. Others reverted to what Paul Fussell has called "a mediæval mindset" that encouraged belief in a variety of apocalyptic prophecies, superstitions, wonders, miracles, rumours and legends.[1] The greatest legend of the war, The Angels of Mons, emerged from the first battle fought by British troops in Europe since Wellington's forces defeated Napoleon at Waterloo a century earlier (see **FT170:30-38**). At the time, the Belgian battle had a symbolic importance that far outweighed any strategic significance. For the British Army, World War I ended where it began, with the first and last English soldiers both killed on the outskirts of Mons in 1914 and 1918. [2]


From the painting by W. H. Margetson
"THE ANGELS OF MONS."

ABOVE: A postcard depicting the 'Angels of Mons'. **BELOW**: Edgar Rice Burroughs.

FACING PAGE: Arthur Machen.

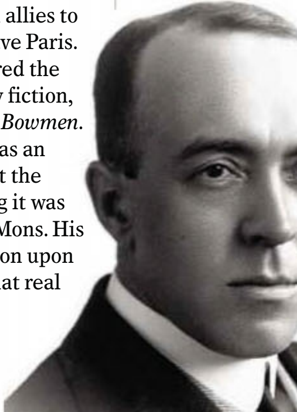
HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

On the morning of 23 August 1914, the professional soldiers of the small but well trained British Expeditionary Force collided with the advancing German army along the Mons-Conde canal. The BEF were heavily outnumbered, but they managed to hold back the German First Army long enough to allow their French allies to regroup on the Marne and save Paris. The retreat from Mons inspired the Welsh-born author of fantasy fiction, Arthur Machen, to write *The Bowmen*. He dismissed his short story as an "indifferent work", but spent the remainder of his life insisting it was the genesis of the Angels of Mons. His protests made little impression upon those who came to believe that real angels had intervened on the Allied side, not only at Mons but elsewhere in the war.

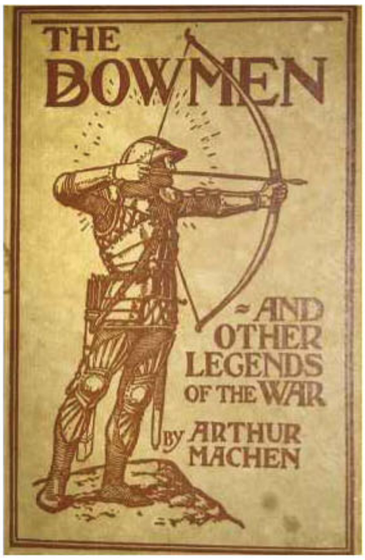
Why was he disbelieved? The ferocity of the battles that followed the retreat and their uncertain outcome encouraged an expectant atmosphere on the Home Front that was receptive to all kinds of supernatural ideas. During 1915, rumours spread that Machen had been tipped off by a military source, or that the idea for *The Bowmen* had been placed in his hand by 'a lady in waiting' sent by a highly-placed source in the British Royal family. There was also Harold Begbie's theory that Machen had received a telepathic impression of 'the vision' from the brain of a dying soldier on the battlefield. [3]

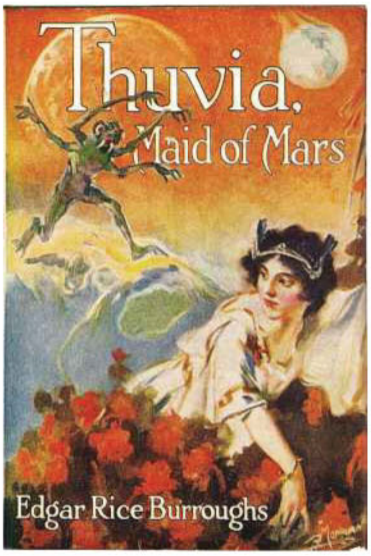
Speculation about Machen's source has continued to the present day. In 1992, Kevin McClure wrote in *Visions of Angels and Bowmen* that Machen's explanation was "not the whole story" and "the men of the BEF, or a number of them, anyway, were aware of reports of a cloud or of angels before the publication of *The Bowmen*". [4] But was that really the case? In *The Bowmen and Other Legends of the War* Machen provides a clear account of his inspiration. It took one week for news of the battle of Mons to reach London. On his way to Mass on the morning of Sunday, 30 August 1914, he saw billboards that told of heavy losses and the desperate need for reinforcements at the Front. As the priest sang and incense drifted above his gospel book, he saw: "…a furnace of torment and death and agony and terror seven times heated, and in the midst of the burning was the British Army". During the ritual he imagined the archers who fought for Henry V at Agincourt invoking the Celtic saints for protection. Thinking of the BEF, he saw "our men with a shining about them".

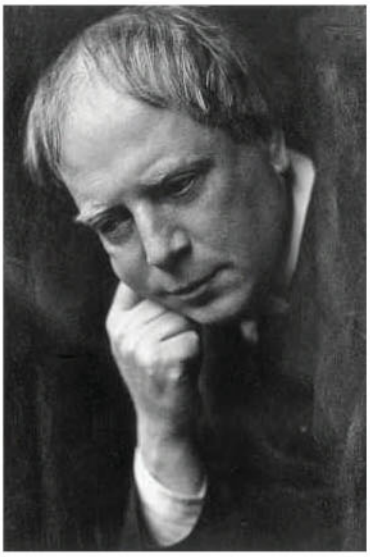
In writing *The Bowmen*, Machen admitted he dipped into a deep well of legend and myth that stretched far beyond Agincourt. His story drew upon a range of sources, from Herotodus's account of supernatural intervention in the Persian Wars to Kipling's *Lost Legion*. In *The Bowmen* a "Latin scholar" amongst the BEF is encouraged when he sees an image of St George before they leave England. During the retreat from Mons he calls out *Adsit Anglis Sanctus Georgius* (St George help the English!) in desperation when his pals are cut off and face imminent death. Suddenly "a shudder and an electric shock" pass through his body and the roar of battle dies down. A chorus of voices cry out "St George! St George!"



GETTY IMAGES






HULTON ARCHIVE / GETTY IMAGES

and a long line of "men who drew the bow" appear beyond the trenches to rain arrows on the advancing German infantry. As the enemy soldiers crash to the ground, he knows "St George had brought his Agincourt bowmen to help the English".

Whether by accident or design, the editor of the *Evening News* published *The Bowmen* on 29 September 1914, the feast day of the archangel Michael. In Victorian art and iconography, St George and St Michael were interchangeable. Both appeared as shining warrior angels that protected Christian soldiers and slew dragons. The clincher for those who *knew* was the reference to "a long line of shapes with a shining about them". In 1915 Machen wrote that "in the popular view shining and benevolent supernatural beings are angels and nothing else and so, I believe, the Bowmen of my story have become 'the Angels of Mons'." [5]

During my research for my book *The Angel of Mons* (2004) I was unable to locate a single reliable eye-witness account of a vision of either bowmen or angels that could be confidently dated before *The Bowmen*. But one odd literary coincidence has led me to reconsider whether Machen's imagination really was the *only* source for the vision of phantom bowmen. Before he gained employment as a journalist, Machen was fond of exploring the slippery boundary between fact and fiction, but he was not the only wordsmith to produce tales of magical armies from the cauldron of war. During the summer of 1914, as Europe stood on the brink of World War I, the creator of Tarzan, Edgar Rice Burroughs, was at work in Chicago expanding his trilogy of Martian novels. In his first story, *A Princess of Mars*, former Confederate soldier John Carter is transported by astral projection to the red planet where he is drawn into a series of magical adventures. Mars is known as Barsoom to its warring tribes and the alien warlords and creatures he meets mirror those from ancient mythology.[6] The fourth novel in the Martian cycle, *Thuvia, Maid of Mars*, appeared in 1916 and The Phantom Bowmen of Lothar appear in chapter seven. The Lotharians are an ancient race who have become trapped in their city surrounded by mountains. The few remaining Lotharians have developed extraordinary psychic powers to defend their isolated city from attacks by hordes of green barbarians, the Torquasians.

His story was completed two months before Machen's

When the Torquasians lay siege to Lothar they encounter the bowmen, "a fantastic army of mentally projected phantoms created by the sheer willpower of the few living Lotharians". Richard Lupoff's biography of Burroughs describes the bowmen as being so realistic that "a vast number of casualties are inflicted on the Torquasians… and the green men are repeatedly driven off." [7] His 1976 study of the Martian cycle makes the link between the bowman of Lothar and *The Bowmen* of Mons and drops a bombshell: Burroughs' notebooks show that *Thuvia, Maid of Mars*, was written between April and June 1914. [8] According to Irwin Porges, Burroughs completed the story during a furious writing schedule that took him from California to New York during the summer of 1914. [9] The finished typescript was sent to his editor at *All-Story Weekly* soon after 20 June. If these dates are accurate, his story was completed at least two months *before* Machen's fantasy was inspired by news of the BEF's stand at Mons. Lupoff maintains "there was no possible way for Burroughs to have read Machen's story before writing his own tale or vice versa." If this was a coincidence, it was "one of the most remarkable such in modern literature." [10] Did the idea for phantom bowmen at Mons and on Mars occur independently to two authors separated by the Atlantic Ocean? If so, this may be an example of literary synchronicity: an idea that was visualised simultaneously by two powerful minds during the world crisis. The concept of synchronicity was first described by Carl Jung who, in fact, refers to the Angels of Mons in his 1958 book *Flying Saucers* as "a visionary rumour". Perhaps the two ideas were, as Jung opined, examples of a type of rumour that was told in different parts of the world "but differs from an ordinary rumour in that it is expressed in the form of visions, or perhaps owed its existence to them in the first place and is kept alive by them". FT

NOTES

1 Paul Fussell, *The Great War in Modern Memory* (OUP 1975)

2 Private John Parr of the Middlesex Regiment died at Obourg, near Mons, on 21 August 1914. He was 15 or 16 and had lied about his age on enlistment. George Ellison, 40, of the 5th Royal Irish Lancers, died nearby one and a half hours before the Armistice was declared on 11 November 1918. His grave in the St Symphorien military cemetery faces that of Parr.

3 See my book *The Angel of Mons* (Wiley 2004) for a full discussion of Machen's sources and his clashes with those who believed in divine intervention such as Harold Begbie, author of *On the Side of the Angels* (1915).

4 Kevin McClure, *Visions of Bowmen and Angels* (Harrogate, 1992).

5 Arthur Machen, *The Bowmen and Other Legends of the War* (London 1915).

6 The first Barsoom story was serialised as *Under the Moons of Mars* in the pulp magazine *The All-Story* during 1912. It appeared as a novel in 1917.

7 Richard A Lupoff, *Edgar Rice Burroughs: Master of Adventure* (Canaveral Press, 1965).

8 Richard A Lupoff, *Barsoom: Edgar Rice Burroughs and the Martian Vision* (Mirage Press, 1976).

9 Irwin Porges, *Edgar Rice Burroughs* (Brigham Young University Press, 1975).

10 I am grateful to Thomas Miller and Alan Bundy, members of Caermaen, the newsgroup of the Friends of Arthur Machen, for drawing my attention to Lupoff's biography of ERB.

Preserving parapsychology

CHRISTOPHER LAURSEN reviews an international conference that examined preserving paranormal collections in archives.

CHRISTOPHER LAURSEN is a PhD candidate in History at the University of British Columbia. His website Extraordinarium is about how people experience and study extraordinary things. His doctoral dissertation is on the poltergeist phenomenon in the mid-20th century.

OUIJA
YES
NO
ABCDEFGHIJKLM
NOPQRSTUVWXYZ
123456
GOOD
JA
NEE
1234567890
OPHOUDEN
GOEDENAVOND

COURTESY HJBF, THE NETHERLANDS

ABOVE: A collection of Ouija boards and séance room artefacts displayed at the conference.

> **Who is going to take care of these valuable documents?**

Investigators and enthusiasts of forteana amass large collections of notes, books, articles, audio-visual items, antiquarian pieces, and other odds and ends. Paraphrasing *Hamlet*, the problem is that once we have "shuffled off this mortal coil," who is going to take care of our valuable documents and materials?

To explore this issue, archivists, librarians, and researchers gathered for a three-day conference in Utrecht, the Netherlands, on 12-14 June 2014: Preserving the Historical Collections of Parapsychology (PHCP). In attendance were over 40 international delegates from Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, the UK, the US, and Canada. Thirteen speakers addressed issues pertaining to the variety of archival holdings, how to preserve them, their value in historical research, digitisation endeavours, and the challenges of keeping material artefacts.

The conference provided an unprecedented opportunity for individuals concerned with the preservation of parapsychological and occult documents and materials to network in person. Reviews by attendees were glowing, and there are plans to hold further conferences. PHCP was organized and funded by Holland's Het Johan Borgman Fonds (HJBF), a non-profit organisation founded in 1969 by the artist, poet, and healer Johan Borgman. HJBF organises conferences, funds publications and offers student grants, and since 2007 operates a long-term Dutch archival project. It was co-organised by the Coalition for the Preservation of Extraordinary Human Experience Collections (CPEHEC) created by the World Institute for Scientific Exploration (WISE), a US-based non-profit organisation working to archive and digitise these materials. Also co-organising was Germany's Institut für Grenzgebiete der Psychologie und Psychohygiene (IGPP, or the Institute for Border Areas of Psychology and Mental Health) founded in 1950 by professor of psychology and famed parapsychologist Hans Bender (1907-1991) at Freiburg University.

The first step in preserving materials begins with the researcher or individual creating and collecting them. Of course, everyone has their own system for organising things, but maintaining the quality and integrity of materials is vital. Planning where original research materials and rare books, journals, images, and so forth may go in the future is best done while you are still alive. Such things – particularly "weird" things – cannot necessarily be entrusted to family or executors.

There are plenty of examples of collections of documents and materials being destroyed, lost, or in limbo after the main caretaker passed away. For example, Canada's Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King (1874-1950) actively documented his participation in Spiritualist séances. Many of those papers were destroyed by his literary executors, according to British Columbia-based archives consultant Walter Meyer zu Erpen, president of the Survival Research Institute of Canada (SRIC) and director of WISE's CPEHEC. "Fortunately, they saw fit to retain some of those records, which are now available through Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa", he said, otherwise this fascinating aspect of the Prime Minister's life would have become mere legend.

It is becoming increasingly common to work with researchers and collectors to preserve documents and materials while they are still alive, said German psychologist Eberhard Bauer, a director at the IGPP in charge of its historical studies, archives and library. He recollected: "When I started to establish a basis for the documentation and research on the history of German psychical research and parapsychology at the Freiburg Institute, it was already obvious to me that important documents and materials connected with important German pioneers were lost – partly of course through World War II, partly through the indifference of their families and relatives regarding their scholarly value."

These collections do have significant scholarly value, as is evident in the many writers, academics, and university students who increasingly make use of them. These materials speak to aspects of everyday life that enter into work in science and religion, extraordinary human experiences, and ongoing exploration of great metaphysical questions. They provide major insights into studies of religions, behavioural and human sciences, the humanities, and, of course, contemporary parapsychology and psychical research. Bauer calls archives and libraries natural places for preserving *Erinnerungskultur* – cultural memory. "They are the backbone for any historical scholarship that wants to explore and to understand the scientific, social, cultural, or religious dimensions of the extraordinary capacities of mankind," he said.

Increasingly, academic and public archives and libraries are places to find fortean materials. More than just places to surf through newspapers and books, as Charles Fort did a century ago, they have become repositories for entire collections. Locations include Cambridge University (Society for Psychical Research collection), Duke University (JB Rhine's Parapsychological Lab collection), and the University of Frieburg (IGPP Library), as well as the Dutch National Library, Zentralbibliothek Zürich, the University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections, the Archives for the Unexplained in Sweden, and others. Bauer commented that it takes such stable organisations to ensure long-term preservation.

Wim Kramer, the conference's organiser and managing director of Het Johan Borgman Fonds, is pleased that archives and libraries in the Netherlands have found the thousands of books and journals on these topics worthy of inclusion in their collections. The Dutch National Library, for example, has decided to digitise Holland's major spiritualistic journals from 1894 to 1941, which says much about the historical value of these publications given the many other digitisation projects they have on the go. As part of the PHCP conference, Utrecht Archives collections director Kaj van Vliet officially handed over the 165-page index they compiled with HJBF of the Dutch Spiritualist journal *Harmonia*. To Kramer, this signals that these collections are at a turning point in gaining notable status in Dutch history. HJBF itself has a building in which these materials are stored and catalogued for transfer to public archives. As Kramer continues his work, materials he had never heard of before sometimes come to light. The hidden history of forteana resurfaces through the archival process, much of which is conducted by volunteers.

The PHCP conference further enabled archivists and librarians to network in order to ensure they were not doing work that had already been done elsewhere, thus focusing on the preservation of materials exclusive to their collections. Brandon Hodge, an American antiquarian, author and expert on writing planchettes and other devices used in Spiritualist séances, said: "With a tremendous workload spread among small, underfunded groups, it is important that every minute spent on preservation is not wasted on duplication of another group's efforts". Digitisation, Hodge noted, has been "the single greatest contribution archives have made to modern scholarship. In reviewing the research of my forebears, I find that I can replicate decades' worth of their research in mere days. Information in folders they spent years accumulating is just a mouse-click and keyword-search away". Kramer adds that it is crucial that copies are made of material and digital archives, so if they are lost in one place, they remain safe in another location. **FT**

Full details of the conference speakers, their presentations, and the brochure for the conference are available on HJBF's website: **http://hetjohanborgmanfonds.nl.** For a detailed review of the conference presentations, see Society for Psychical Research delegate Tom Ruffles's excellent report from 4 July 2014 on his blog: **http://tomruffles.blogspot co.uk/**

REWIRING WIKIS

Archives and libraries are engaging in ongoing projects to digitise their collections and make them more widely accessible. Online projects, such as the Internet Archive (archive.org), provide free access to scanned publications now in the public domain. Certain organisations, such as the Society for Psychical Research (SPR), provide access to their journals and proceedings online to their members using platforms like the Library of Exploratory Science (lexscien.org). Recently, digitised SPR journals from 2008 onwards have been made available to subscribing libraries via Academic Search Complete. *Fortean Times* itself has become available as an electronic magazine that one can purchase to read on smart phone or tablets anywhere. More and more, one can access publications from their digital devices, facilitating further enthusiasm and research into fortean topics.

But what about starting points for people to learn about these topics? Wikipedia entries often come up at the top of Internet searches of fortean keywords, but certain opinionated and, by and large, anonymous individuals have fought for control over controversial entries, including ones on the paranormal. The tone of these entries has become one that altogether dismisses experiences and studies of extraordinary things as bunk. It has long been recommended (even by Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales himself [1]) that writers and students not treat Wikipedia as anything more than preliminary information given that content is user-generated and therefore unreliable, but most people still use the popular website to become informed (or misinformed) about topics. The problem is that Wikipedia lacks expert peer review that otherwise helps safeguard accuracy and balance in published encyclopaedias, reference materials, and academic research.

Now there are two efforts afoot to present alternate Wiki-styled reference materials on parapsychology, psychical research, and forteana, one of which was discussed at the PHCP conference in Utrecht in June. Baltimore-based physician John H Reed, president of the World Institute for Scientific Exploration (WISE) founded in 2011, was among the presenters. The WISE Worldwide Resource Center (www.wisewiki.org) and the WISE Digital Library aim to provide reference and digitised content to users. The Digital Library already boasts 217 full-text periodical titles. Given Wikipedia's hullabaloos, WISEwiki only enables approved authors to add and edit its pages, but seeing that it is in its developmental stages, its interface is currently challenging to navigate and entries often link back to Wikipedia and answers.com entries.

The other project in the works is by the SPR (www.spr.ac.uk). Founded in 1882, the SPR holds "no corporate views" and is using educational funds through the Nigel Buckmaster Legacy to finance a free, online encyclopædic resource. Robert McLuhan, who is spearheading the project writes: "The SPR resource will be smaller, with perhaps up to 1,000 entries over the course of three to four years," and more narrowly focused than WISEwiki. Its summaries of psi topics and case studies aim to be in-depth, and it will be peer-reviewed rather than open access like Wikipedia. McLuhan hopes the online resource will alleviate "the invisibility of serious psi research to the general public". [2]

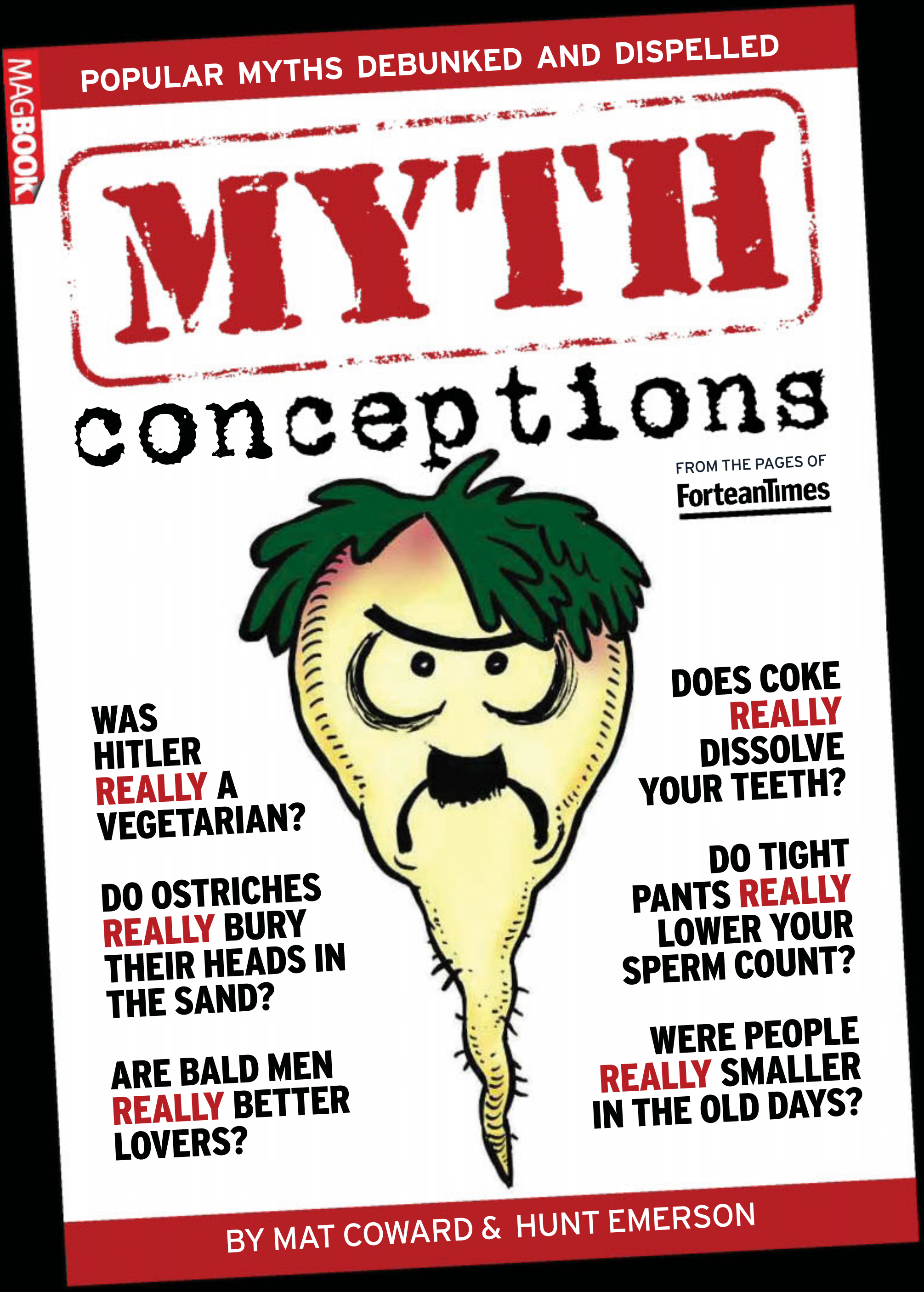
The online world continues to be in developmental flux. Accessibility of interfaces and search engine optimisation are of prime importance if new resources are to effectively provide an alternative to otherwise sketchy online information.

NOTES

[1] Jessica Roy, "Sorry, Students: Even Jimmy Wales Agrees You Shouldn't Cite Wikipedia in That Term Paper", *Betabeat: The Lowdown on High Tech*, 7 Oct 2012, accessed at betabeat.com.

[2] Robert McLuhan, "Psi Encyclopedias", *Paranormalia*, 7 June 2014, accessed at http://monkeywah.typepad.com/paranormalia/2014/06/psi-encyclopedias.html.

THE TRUTH ISN'T OUT THERE...



MAGBOOK

POPULAR MYTHS DEBUNKED AND DISPELLED

MYTH conceptions

FROM THE PAGES OF ForteanTimes

WAS HITLER REALLY A VEGETARIAN?

DO OSTRICHES REALLY BURY THEIR HEADS IN THE SAND?

ARE BALD MEN REALLY BETTER LOVERS?

DOES COKE REALLY DISSOLVE YOUR TEETH?

DO TIGHT PANTS REALLY LOWER YOUR SPERM COUNT?

WERE PEOPLE REALLY SMALLER IN THE OLD DAYS?

BY MAT COWARD & HUNT EMERSON

AVAILABLE FROM AMAZON.CO.UK
OR VISIT MAGBOOKS.COM FOR MORE INFORMATION

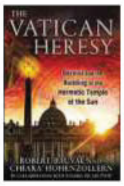
amazon.co.uk

This month's books, films and games

reviews

Pick'n'mix classical scholars

An exploration of the influence of hermetic thought on the Renaissance acknowledges solid academic antecedents but then slips into fairly tenuous claims



The Vatican Heresy

Bernini and the Building of the Hermetic Temple of the Sun

Robert Bauval & Chiara Hohenzollern

Bear and Co 2014

Pb, 276 pp, illus, bib, ind, £12.99, ISBN 9781591431787

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £11.69

The Vatican Heresy is an exploration of the influence of hermetic thought on Renaissance society, and in particular on Bernini's design of the Vatican Piazza. This is not an original enquiry; since the pioneering work of the late great Frances Yates, many academics have looked at precisely the same topic, and a few have written about Bernini's piazza too. In many respects, this is an admirable attempt to popularise the stream of academic discourse on the subject. It is also an excellent example of a genre I have come to think of as gonzo scholarship.

If you saw a book with this title in the fiction section of your local bookshop (assuming you have one) you would know what to expect; a racy conspiracy thriller, linking a stock ancient mystery to a contemporary political crisis, with a doomsday threat narrowly averted by a dashing but flawed hero aided by a geeky but resolute female character who provides the love interest.

Seeing it in the non-fiction section suggests something no less formulaic. The title hints at dark doings, and the blurb has the usual references to time bombs, and the shattering of our perceptions of the Catholic Church. So it was a largely pleasant surprise to find that this book is quite respectful of previous academic scholarship, and offers not an explosive exposé of religious chicanery so much as a gentle reminder that behind the orthodoxy of Catholicism lies something altogether more exotic and recondite. Who knew?

The main thesis of the book is that Bernini's piazza is a model of, among other things, Kepler's first law of planetary motion; Kepler took Copernicus's heliocentric theory and developed it, proving that planets orbited the Sun in an ellipse rather than a circle. From this, they proceed to claim that the piazza is actually a 'City of the Sun', a favourite Utopian trope of hermetists. That's a big claim for a relatively small piazza, and I was not convinced of it by this book.

I say 'among other things' because Bernini claimed other and different meanings for his achievement, such as a schematic representation of the Church opening its maternal arms to the masses. Also, given Bernini's bravado, it was quite likely that he enjoyed the challenge of producing a perfect ellipse in a public space for the sheer mathematical joy of it. Nonetheless, Bauval and Hohenzollern are quite right to suggest that the plaza, with its Egyptian obelisk and fountain foci, bears an uncanny resemblance to Kepler's explanatory drawings.

Again, this is not an original insight, and again the authors are honest enough to quote and attribute various academic historians of art and architecture saying pretty much the same thing. So the odd reader might be left wondering why they bothered. I'd argue that it is good to go over the ground in a popular book; not everyone has read, or heard of, the likes of Yates, or Alex Dougherty, Joscelyn Godwin and the other fine scholars who have trodden this path before them.

> "You know it's gonzo scholarship when the authors tell you where they went and what they did"

Along the way, they offer some material of their own, some of it rather tenuous. I was pretty surprised to learn that the Annunciation is the central feast in the Catholic calendar; what happened to Easter? It helps the authors' contention that the Vatican Piazza is a representation of Campanella's 'city of the Sun', but it makes them look a little sloppy in other respects.

But the come-on of the title, and the coyly conspiratorial language that prefaces the main thrust of the book, tells you that the authors are doing more than simply opening a well-worn academic pathway to a wider public; this is gonzo scholarship.

You know it's gonzo scholarship when the big photographs of the subject are not just photos of plazas, obelisks and churches; they are photos of the authors in front of plazas, obelisks and churches. You see the author first, then the apparent subject of the photograph; the author is foregrounded. You know it's gonzo scholarship when the authors tell you what they did, where they went and who they met, rather than simply telling you about the subject. You know it's gonzo scholarship when the merely interesting is spoken of as if it's about to blow the whole show wide open; when suggestive hints are taken as dark secrets revealed; when a concatenation of 'what ifs' stands for an original theory.

There's nothing intrinsically wrong with this approach; anything that gets the arcana of history out to a wider audience is good news for democracy and culture. And it is sometimes necessary to titillate an audience to get it to listen. Ultimately, however, there is something wearisome about the Jack Horner approach to classical scholarship, with its naïve pomposity, its authorial ego, and its over-egging of its own originality.

But between the fiction and non-fiction secrets and heresies, there's a big market of readers who would like to believe that their heroes are the real scholars; that they have gone where the establishment fears to go, exploded the myths of orthodoxy and struck a blow in a real conflict. *The Vatican Heresy* won't bring the Catholic Church down, and it hasn't revealed an explosive secret at the heart of the papal enclave. It hasn't significantly added to the body of work on Hermetism or Bernini. It is interesting, in an anecdotal way, and may tell new things to a new readership;. Given the tilt of gonzo scholarship, perhaps we should be grateful for that.

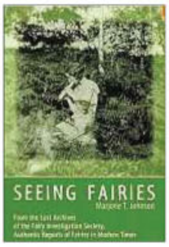
Noel Rooney

Fortean Times Verdict

GONZO, BUT NOT BAD FOR ALL THAT – IT CREDITS ITS ANTECEDENTS **7**

Very modern fairies

The fairies here are not the fearsome hooligans of yore but part of a new tradition that's merging into a New Age spirit mash-up



Seeing Fairies

Authentic Reports of Fairies in Modern Times

Marjorie T Johnson

Anomalist Books 2014
Pb, 363pp, $19.95/£13.99, ISBN 9781938398261
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £13.99

Google the phrase 'seeing fairies' and you'll discover an abundance of modern reports, enough to demonstrate that in this age of dominant materialism the topic is far from extinct. These modern reports, however, are mostly contaminated with contemporary cultural imagery – mainly from fantasy and horror entertainments and commercial exploitation.

It's true that we may never be free of overlaid cultural imagery in whatever period we study, but the key is in distinguishing what is contemporary from whatever remains of older traditional imagery. What maximises the value of the narratives in this book is that they were collected in the lifetime of the Nottinghamshire-born secretary of the Fairy Investigation Society (FIS), Marjorie Johnson (1911–2011), spanning the late 19th to late 20th centuries. For an obituary by her editor, the folklorist historian and *FT* contributor Dr Simon Young, see **FT292:26–27**.

Simon Young's introduction gives a brief history of the FIS – founded in London in 1929 by naval scientist Quentin Craufurd – its various phases and notable executives and members. At first they had no collective theory, as some came from spiritualism, some from Theosophy; the beliefs of the rest are largely unknown. As far as they had a coherent 'mission', it was to study fairies and experiment with ways of seeing them. Gradually the Theosophical notion of fairies as nature spirits or elementals became dominant and its influence exists to this day.

From an early age, Marjorie Johnson had frequent encounters – e.g. an elf in her bedroom – and long before she joined the FIS (some time in the late 1940s), she had letters published in weekly magazines, describing herself as a "fairy seer". She continued seeing fairies all her life and had some 'regular' contacts including a "radiant being". Young writes: "had she been born in prehistoric Britain she would have been a 'shaman'" – or in the 16th or 17th centuries "would have attracted the attention of the local ecclesiastical court [or] witch-finder". She also collected accounts from friends and correspondents into the 1930s. Like so many other societies, the FIS reformed after WWII and 1950 finds Marjorie running things as its administrator, fielding queries about the 'proof' of fairy existence and encouraging correspondents all over the world to send accounts of their own experiences.

In 1955, another member – the Scottish folklorist and author Alasdair Alpin McGregor – joined Marjorie in ramping up the collection of accounts and the pair (with McGregor in the lead) made a public appeal, through the BBC's magazine *The Listener* and the journal *Folk-lore* among other publications. Narratives from these two sources – FIS members and the appeals – make up the bulk of *Seeing Fairies*. After resignating as Secretary in the 1960s, Marjorie kept adding material up to the book's final draft in 1996.

On the whole the accounts are "rather insipid"; by this, Dr Young means that, in contrast to the testimony of earlier centuries, Marjorie's Good Folk are just that, not scary: when they are not seen as hovering lights, they are tiny figures (sometimes with wings) walking, dancing, leading tiny horses, flying from bush to bush, wearing flower parts as clothing, and when not tending trees and helping buds flower they amused children and helped the dying. The fairies of earlier periods were to be feared – they abducted, spoiled crops and withered livestock, waged wars and dragged the dead along with their flying hosts. The appellation 'Good Folk' was only used to appease them.

Nevertheless, the narratives collected here have a curious fascination of their own and their sincerity is transparent. Significantly, given the dual philosophical lineage of their seers, the fairies here are described as both 'spirits' and 'elementals' merging, in the last chapter, with 'angels'. They might not be fairies of the old tradition, Dr Young says, but they are the fairies of a new tradition, one that perhaps has already evolved into the New Age mash-up of angels, ghosts and Grays. Fairy glamour, music, apports, photos and dancing also have their chapters. Of particular interest to forteans is Marjorie's account of the 'gnomes of Wollaton Park', seen by Nottingham schoolchildren in 1979 (see **FT31:42**), mentioning prior apparitions there.

Simon Young is to be commended for bringing this collection of accounts to print. They may not be as fearsome as the fairies of old but this anthology represents modern experience and complements those of Evans Wentz, Lang, Yeats, Sikes, and Campbell.

Bob Rickard

Fortean Times Verdict

A TREASURE TROVE OF NEW (AND LESS SCARY) FAIRY MATERIAL **9**

Whisperers

The Secret History of the Spirit World

J H Brennan

Duckworth Overlook 2013
Hb, 400pp, £20.00, ISBN 9780715645918
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £18.00

THE GHOST WORE BLACK

J H Brennan is a writer with wide experience. Starting as a journalist, he has written about roleplay gaming, young adults' fantasy and the occult. Like his previous work, *Whisperers* tackles a fairly hefty paranormal topic, this time spirit contact through history.

Although it touches on ancient Egypt, Asia and South America, the perspective is primarily on Western esoterica. The first half of the book concerns itself with history; Brennan begins with describing shamanism in what he terms 'primitive society'. He then explores the ancient world, highlighting how spirit contact in Greece and Rome has roots in shamanic practices. A fair amount of attention is also given to spirit contact in non-Western parts of the ancient world, with chapters on Egypt, Asia and the rise of Islam which make for a fascinating read. This was a time when seemingly anyone could talk with a godlike being.

But from the Middle Ages, the focus is primarily occidental, Brennan changing tack by profiling the likes of Joan of Arc, Nostradamus, John Dee, Swedenborg, Mesmer and Rasputin to illustrate how the nature of spirit contact has changed from angelic beings to pernickety entities requiring the advice of mysterious grimoires to control and conjure, to the modern enigmatic being whispering advice to a chosen few. It's what you might get if Neil Gaiman was asked to produce a history book. For some strange reason, Brennan uses the debunked account of Rasputin's death involving copious amounts of poison, bullets and beatings – Rasputin died more mundanely from gunshot wounds (Mythbusters *FT* Aug 2007).

With the dawning of the modern age, things get a little trickier. The rational mindset meant that spirit contact got inventive, with some unusual figures, such as the eminent scientist Swedenborg communing with the Other World in middle age. Aleister Crowley appears as a throwback, with his prodigious career as an occult master; his practices and those of the Golden Dawn hark back to the days of John Dee, when conjuring spirits was that bit more dramatic.

The second half of the book is theoretical in focus. Of particular note is the scathing attack on the Skeptical movement. Brennan admits that it is needed to balance things out in approaching the paranormal, but berates the determination of some to find all paranormal activity negligible or indeed fraudulent. Julian Jaynes and his exploration of spirit contact in the prehistoric and ancient world is touched upon in part one of *Whisperers*. In part four, Brennan turns his attention to Jaynes's theory of the Bicameral Mind.

Groundbreaking when it came out in the 1970s, the theory argues that contact with spiritual beings was more prolific in prehistoric cultures owing to the fact that people weren't actually capable of conscious thought. The manner in which the right side of the brain communicated with the more logical left side led to commands issued by authority figures coming across as ordinances from a god, hence the rise of 'god-kings'.

Other than that, the prehistoric social actor was more akin to a zombie. Jaynes believed that the rise of urban living and literate society circa 3000 BC saw the end of the Bicameral Mind as people developed conscious thought. Brennan isn't convinced by this, citing several incidences of archæological evidence pointing to the existence of complex, literate societies as far back as the last Ice Age. However, this seems to be mere nit-picking on Brennan's part, though it is fascinating to consider that ancient Egypt possibly existed for approximately 36,000 years.

The final chapters of the book cover the usual territory of the Fox sisters, Victorian psychical research, modern ghost appearances and poltergeists. On initial reading, it all seems superfluous, until Brennan finishes up with the 'out there' theories of Jung's collective unconscious, the potentiality of mind-altering drugs leading us to heightened reality and the implications of modern physics with the discovery of the neutrino and quantum mechanics. What Brennan concludes as the source of spirits is somewhat surprising, as for much of the book, it seems as if he is convinced they are the traces of the dead and supernatural beings. He can't quite lay a finger on what they are exactly.

The book raises some valuable questions and will leave the reader ruminating for some time as they try to figure out just what exactly it is they have read. Certainly one to blow the orthodox mindset.

Mandy Collins

Fortean Times Verdict

ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE HISTORY OF SPIRIT CONTACTS **9**

The Invention of News

How the World Came to Know About Itself

Andrew Pettegree

Yale University Press 2014

Hb, 442pp, illus, notes, bib, ind, £25.00, ISBN 9780300179088

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £22.50

Pettegree, a professor of modern history, covers four centuries of print in 10 countries to give a vivid sense of how we came to understand our everyday events and lives, reflecting on the difficulties of separating fact from fiction. The caption on an image of a giraffe towering over its exotically dressed minder emphasises that travellers' tales were hard to dismiss when such 'implausible' creatures exist.

Trust and establishing truth were critical in the Middle Ages when news was conveyed orally and the status of the messenger was more regarded than the content of his message. This book may be only tangentially fortean, but the issues are perennial.

Val Stevenson

Fortean Times Verdict

FOUR CENTURIES OF ALL THE NEWS THAT FITS **9**

A serious joke

The countercultural Discordian religion is still culturally relevant – and amusing

Historia Discordia

The Origins of the Discordian Society

Ed: Adam Gorightly

RVP Press 2014

Pb, 296pp, illus, $23.05/£15.00, ISBN 9781618613219

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £15.00

In the pre-Interweb era one's entry to Discordianism was either through *Illuminatus!* by Robert Anton Wilson and Bob Shea, or *Principia Discordia*, the tract intended to reveal "not a complicated put-on disguised as a new religion but a new religion disguised as a complicated joke." Nowadays, when everything bad that happens is labelled a conspiracy, it's only right that the Discordian conspiracy be reintroduced to the world to rebalance the dogma with the katma, even if the author's investigation dispels some of the mystery fun by unmasking the true identities and methods of Malacalypse (The Younger), Lord Omar Khyyam Ravenhurst, Mordecai The Foul *et al.* But since the upside is a trove of rare primary sources: rubber stamps, membership cards, letters, tracts, edicts, cartoons, collages, photostatically reproduced in a generous A4 format, then so be it.

A most delightful web of connections and coincidences weaves around this group of iconoclasts and hierophants whose antics to disrupt reality and automatic thinking with slyly surreal communiqués (Operation Mindfuck) have been more culturally influential than most people realise. The Discordian brainwashing conspiracy of presenting countercutural 'serious' jokes and ideas in letters and pamphlets purportedly from secret societies seems so quintessentially late-60s psychedelic, but we learn how the roots of the plot stem from the late 50s when West Coast humorists Kerry Thornley and Greg Hill teamed-up. Thornley knew Lee Harvey Oswald in the Marines, started writing a novel about him years before the Dallas event, and later testified to the Warren Commission.

As legend has it, the first edition of *Principia Discordia* (fully reproduced here) was clandestinely produced in the office of District Attorney Jim Garrison, who later indicted Thornley as part of a conspiratorial cabal that allegedly orchestrated JFK's murder. Conspirator, yes, but wrong conspiracy. In some ways, Thornley and his fellow Discordians were even more dangerous than the JFK assassins. Funnier too.

Jerry Glover

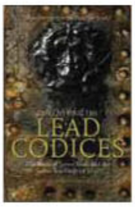
Fortean Times Verdict

A MAD, BAD AND DANGEROUS (BUT ALSO HILARIOUS) RELIGION **8**

To order any of these titles – or any other book in print – contact the
FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP
Telephone: 08430600031 Fax: 01326 569555 Email: FT@sparkledirect.co.uk
Address: Fortean Times Bookshop, PO Box 60, Helston TR13 0TP.
We accept all major credit and debit cards including Switch & Amex. Cheques or postal orders should be made payable to the FT Bookshop. Delivery is 7–10 days, subject to availability. Postage & packing is free within the UK.

Sinking like a lead balloon

An elaborate and ambitious web of speculation – based on no particular knowledge – fails to convince that the lead books described are those mentioned in Revelation



Discovering the Lead Codices

The Book of Seven Seals and the Secret Teachings of Jesus

David & Jennifer Elkington

Watkins Publishing 2014

Hb, 299pp, refs, bib, ind, £20.00, ISBN 9781780287669

FORTEAN TIMES BOOKSHOP PRICE £18.00

In 2007 David and Jennifer Elkington were shown photographs of some curious metal books. They later saw some of the books themselves.

The provenance of the books is uncertain. The Elkingtons now contend that they came from a cave or caves in northern Jordan, and were smuggled over the border into Israel, although in a 2010 email to an Oxford University academic, Peter Thonemann, David Elkington wrote: "We think that [a codex that Elkington wanted Thonemann to examine] has a possible origin in Alexandria at the beginning of the 1st millennium AD (the Bedouin who brought them to me said that his father found them in northern Egypt)."

Information about these finds has dribbled into the public domain. We have now heard about 25 books, six tablets, two copper tablets and one lead scroll. Most of the books are made of lead. They vary in size: the largest is 200 x 120mm; the smallest 30 x 30mm. Seventeen are or were sealed by metal rings on one side; eight on all sides. Most were apparently produced by casting. They all seem to have writing on them. Most of this is in Palæo-Hebrew letters – a script first described from around 500 BC, but used well into the late Second Temple period for documents of particular sanctity. Some of the Dead Sea Scrolls are in Palæo-Hebrew. Most scholars have said that the writing is gibberish, although Elkington contends that one regularly repeated text reads "he [or I] shall walk in uprightness."

There are many images on the codices, including willow branches, menorahs, palm branches, etrogim and palm trees (all associated with the Jewish festival of Tabernacles), and what Elkington contends is the face of a man.

Some of the actual codices were made available to Elkington. He commissioned various investigations, including an analysis of the lead. This indicated, but highly equivocally, that it may be up to a couple of millennia old.

None of the codices has been released for examination by any established researchers. Elkington himself is no expert. He describes himself as "primarily an Egyptologist, specializing in Egypto-Palestinian links", and as the author of an "acclaimed academic thesis on the resonance and acoustical origins of religion." But the 'thesis' is self-published. He holds no formal qualification in any relevant discipline. His wife, Jennifer, is a literary publicist.

With the help of Margaret Barker, a genuine, if rather left field, authority on the theology of the Jerusalem Temple, the Elkingtons have woven an elaborate and ambitious web of speculation around the codices.

In the book of Daniel, Daniel is given prophecies about the future of Jerusalem, and told to shut them away in a sealed book until the end times. In Revelation, Jesus opens a scroll or a book (depending on your translation) with seven seals. John then sees an angel coming to earth carrying a little book which had already been opened. He was told to eat it – learn and keep secret its contents.

2 Esdras (4 Ezra) describes how, after the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, the holy books of the Jews were restored. Five men, inspired by God, sat for 40 days and wrote 94 books. Twenty-four were made public, but the remaining 70 were not. "…[I]n them is the spring of understanding, the fountain of wisdom and the river of knowledge."

The 24 books are the Hebrew Bible. But where are the 70 more important ones? The Christians alone preserved the story of these books; the Mishnah warns sternly about "outside books". To read them is to lose your share in the world to come.

Elkington thinks that his sealed books (although most of them are not sealed on all sides) are some of the 70. In acknowledging, unlike Pharisaism, the authority of these books, the early Christians were the true heirs not only of Daniel, but also of the ancient Temple tradition of the Davidic king becoming (as embodied in the festival of Tabernacles – hence the symbols), the visible presence of God. Jesus was that presence, and it is his face shining out of the codices. It's unsurprising that they were found in northern Jordan: Jesus (particularly in the Fourth Gospel), did much of his ministry there, and when the Christians fled from Jerusalem they sought refuge across the Jordan. It's unsurprising that they're written in Palæo-Hebrew: that's what you expect for such sacred texts. It's unsurprising that the texts often don't seem to make sense: they're encoded, and accessible only to the initiated. They can't be forgeries, since they're not copies of anything known to archæology.

The Elkingtons' contentions have been savaged by almost all commentators. Peter Thonemann, asked by David Elkington to comment on a Greek inscription on a copper codex, immediately identified the inscription as reading "without grief, farewell! Abgar also known as Eision". It had been lifted verbatim from a tombstone from Madaba, Jordan, dated to AD 108/9, which has been on display for around 50 years in the Archæological Museum in Amman. More damaging, though, was the fact that a palm tree symbol on this (plainly recently manufactured) codex was identical to that on several of the lead codices. Robert Deutsch has noted that on a single leaf of one of the codices there appear a head of Alexander the Great (from a coin of one of his generals), a palm tree from a Bar Kochba coin, eight-pointed stars from Jewish and Seleucid coins, and the head of Domitian – again from a coin. A modern tourist trinket seems to have been used too.

Does it follow that because some of the codices are fakes, that they all are? Well, no. But Jim Davila's comment is devastating:

"Some guy makes a major epigraphic discovery. So what does he do? He goes out and finds a forger and has the forger make up some very similar fakes and salts the real cache of codices with them. You believe that?"

I don't believe it. Nor do I believe, as some have said, that the Elkingtons are charlatans. They genuinely believe that they're on to something big. But there's nothing so dangerous as a true believer. Their credulity and lack of expertise mean that this book is of little academic interest. And, sadly, it is too structurally muddled to be read as an entertaining archæological detective story.

Charles Foster

Fortean Times Verdict

MUDDLED, AMATEURISH AND NOT EVEN VERY ENTERTAINING **4**

ALSO RECEIVED

We leaf through a selection of recent fortean books...

Ancient Aliens On Mars 2

Mike Bara

Adventures Unlimited Press 2014
Pb, 234pp, illus, colour plates, $19.95. ISBN 9781939149312

We love books about Mars, the crankier the better. Here, Bara reprises his earlier book of the same title, presenting grander theories such as the huge city under the Cydonia plains built by 'aliens' who must be described as 'ancient'. The book is crammed with hundreds of enlargements of NASA photography of the planet surface, which Bara claims show trees, geometric structures, vast sculptures, city plans, and also rocks resembling heads, trees, skulls and mechanical parts. Love it! The best anomaly in this collection is a comic strip showing human exploration of 'The Face on Mars' drawn by the great artist Jack Kirby in his youth (1958), 18 years before the notorious Viking photos of the visage in Cydonia.

Green Planets

Eds: Gerry Canavan & Kim Stanley Robinson eds.

Wesleyan University Press 2014
Pb, 295pp, index, notes, illus, $??.??. ISBN 9780819574275

This is a serious study of the relationship between ecological science, the politics and activists of environmentalism, and modern science fiction, a subject Robinson famously explored in his Mars trilogy. Ten essays span from unsullied Edens to non-human and planetary ecologies via brave new worlds and various apocalypses. Writers from HG Wells to China Miéville and movie depictions (eg. *Avatar, District 9*, etc) are discussed. There are huge lists of green themes in movies, literature, TV, comics and games, which would be more useful if alphabetically or chronologically organised. This analyses the mythology of extraordinary crises, real and imagined, and the human response of real or imagined science.

Prehistoric Britain

The Stonehenge Enigma

Robert John Langdon

ABC Publishing 2014
Hb, 222pp, illus, index, £14.99. ISBN 9781907979026

Boldly stepping into the vacuum left by the late John Michell, Langdon – a retired telecoms engineer now a writer and historian who runs a bookshop in East Sussex – self-publishes an interesting new thesis about Stonehenge. After the last Ice Age retreated, Britain was actually a collection of small islands and the henge was built by an unknown seafaring civilization 5,000 years earlier than the convention dating. His analysis also reveals "a six thousand year old map of Atlantis" at the Wiltshire site and that the true Atlantis was 'Doggerland' now on the bed of the North Sea. Here too is a revision of Stonehenge metrology and the ley theory of Alfred Watkins. The book is nicely presented, setting out proofs of his ideas and with a timeline extending throughout.

Demon Street

David Rountree & Robbie Lunt

Career Press 2014
Pb, 216pp, bib, $15.99, ISBN 9781601633262

There is such a plethora of supernatural dramas on both big and little screens these days, all told credulously, with sudden camera shots and crashing sounds to make the scary bits scarier... and each claiming to a true story. This tale of a violent haunting in Gainesville, Florida, by two ghost hunters – both with apparently impressive credentials – reads as if it were written with a movie script in mind. Behind the gloss they make an interesting point. The authors say they suffered psychic "backlashes" for a long time after their two-month investigation despite taking care; and now they fear for large-scale consequences of the "hundreds" of self-taught and self-proclaimed "demonologists" out there and on the net, dabbling in exorcisms and even raising them for profit or PR.

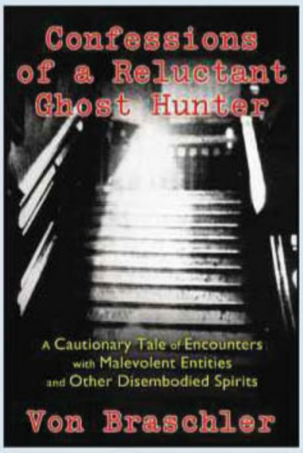
TRICK OR TREAT

Lisa Morton

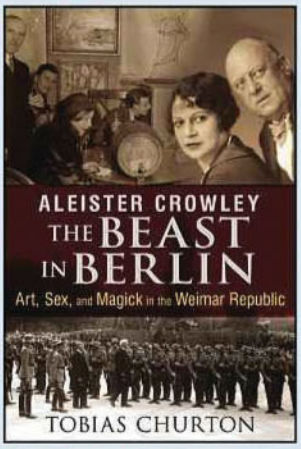
Reaktion Books (reaktionbooks.co.uk) 2013
Pb 229pp, colour illus, refs, index, £16.95. ISBN 9781780231877

From an authority on Hallowe'en lore comes all you need to know about this 'misunderstood' festival. Morton clarifies its origins (Celtic *Samhain* vs Catholic All Hallows Eve, aka All Souls and All Saints); then follows its evolution from mediæval times, its export to America, where it evolved to the point where it has been reimported, largely devoid of any religious or traditional importance. Along the way, Hallowe'en has absorbed elements of Mexico's Day of the Dead, Mardi Gras, the old Lord of Misrule, Guy Fawkes Day (and even the Hindu 'festival of lights', Diwali). The growing list of the night's denizens, both the evil and the Undead, are examined; with closing chapters on portrayals of the festival in books, games and films. Well-written and illustrated, informative and entertaining.

INNER TRADITIONS
BEAR & COMPANY
New Books on Ancient Mysteries, the Occult, and Spirituality


Confessions of a Reluctant Ghost Hunter
A Cautionary Tale of Encounters with Malevolent Entities and Other Disembodied Spirits
Von Braschler

CONFESSIONS OF A RELUCTANT GHOST HUNTER
A Cautionary Tale of Encounters with Malevolent Entities and Other Disembodied Spirits
VON BRASCHLER
Foreword by Jim Harold
A how-to primer on safe ghost removal with accounts of the author's most dangerous spirit confrontations.
£ 12.99, paper, 192 pages, 6 x 9, ISBN 978-1-62055-382-4



ALEISTER CROWLEY: THE BEAST IN BERLIN
Art, Sex, and Magick in the Weimar Republic
TOBIAS CHURTON
A biographical history of Aleister Crowley's activities in Berlin from 1930 to 1932 as Hitler was rising to power.
£ 20.00, hardcover, 432 pages, 6 x 9, Includes 16-page color insert and 55 b&w illustrations
ISBN 978-1-62055-256-8
Available to order online and at bookstores everywhere

SEND REVIEW COPIES OF DVDS, BLU-RAYS AND GAMES TO:
FORTEAN TIMES, PO BOX 71602, LONDON E17 0QD.

Helix: Season 1

Created by Cameron Porsandeh, US 2014

Sony Home Pictures, £19.99 (DVD), £36.99 (Blu-ray)

There's a leak of a virus at an unregulated biochemical research facility in the Arctic; two scientists die and a third is horribly infected. Those infected by the virus have a mouth full of thick black blood; those who die deliquesce into black goo; those who survive become zombie-like – but superhumanly fast, strong, aggressive and cunning, with an urge to infect others.

A small team of scientists from the Centers for Disease Control are called in to investigate, to isolate the virus and prevent it spreading out disastrously into the world. There are tensions from the start. Two of the team, Alan Farragut (Billy Campbell – Jordan Collier in *The 4400* and much else) and Julia Walker (Kyra Zagorsky) are ex-husband and wife, while the infected victim of the virus is Alan's brother Peter (Neil Napier) who once had an affair with Julia. Other members of the team are concealing their own secrets – and then there's Major Sergio Balleseros (Mark Ghanime), an Army liaison officer who clearly has his own agenda.

When they arrive at the facility they find the director, Hiroshi Hatake (Hiroyuki Sanada) evasive and unhelpful; he's disturbingly creepy and utterly untrustworthy. Episode by episode, each covering a single day, we learn of more and more that Hatake has been covering up – and the plot becomes more and more convoluted.

Most of the action in set in the Arctic base, shaped like an upturned flan-tin, a multi-level complex of labs and corridors, made even more claustrophobic when all communication with the outside world is cut off shortly after the team arrive. There's some relief from this with the introduction of Anana (Luciana Carro), a feisty law enforcement officer from a nearby Inuit village. But then some of the main characters' eyes turn silvery...

The show's minor plot-holes, inconsistencies and scientific clangers caused some critics to pan it, but I found it seriously unsettling, and one of the scariest things I've seen on TV – not for anything supernatural, but for the horrific consequences of unbridled human ambition, lust for power, deceit and lack of concern for fellow humans. The infected "vectors" are dangerous, but they're almost benign compared to the staff of the research facility, and worse, the secretive Ilaria Corporation behind them. The body count is high, and so is the disgust factor – don't watch this if you're at all squeamish.

The production team have a good pedigree, between them having worked on *Battlestar Galactica*, *Lost*, *Contact*, *The X-Files* and other successful shows. Their talent and experience make Helix a disturbing and powerful drama – ending with a massively intriguing cliffhanger which guarantees viewing of Season 2 next year.

David V Barrett

Fortean Times Verdict
SCARY AND COMPELLING TECHNO-THRILLER **9**

20,000 Days on Earth

Dir Iain Forsyth, Jane Pollard, UK 2014

On UK release from 19 Sept 2014

Much has been made of Nick Cave's workmanlike attitude to what he does, but less is known of the thought processes that go into the creation of the narratives that make up his songs and novels. *20,000 Days on Earth*, directed by Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard, seeks to probe his psyche: a starting point is the thoughts he's put down in notebooks, Cave giving the directors access to them.

This part fiction/part documentary film depicts the day he starts work on his latest album, *Push the Sky Away*, (literally, on his 20,000th day on Earth) and is removed from the usual "warts and all" film. Instead, in a semi-improvised, semi-scripted and very filmic way, it follows Cave around his adopted home town of Brighton. A studio session, a psychiatrist's session, lunch with Bad Seeds musician and co-writer Warren Ellis, a trip to his archive, and journeys around Brighton having (imaginary?) conversations with old friends and colleagues including Ray Winston and Kylie Minogue, make up his day.

The atmospheric and stylish sets aren't all they seem: Ellis doesn't really make his home in the fisherman's cottage overlooking Seven Sisters that's depicted, and Cave's archive room is actually housed in Melbourne. Here, Brighton Town Hall is the film's stand-in.

Performance and transformation are concepts that keep cropping up, whether it's the transformation into the rock god that Cave consciously seeks to become, or the transformation of an audience following a powerful performance. There's an anecdote about Nina Simone at the Cave-curated Meltdown festival, for instance, that sums up how he feels about the power a performance can have.

The film gives us a chance to steal glimpses of his copious doodles and notes, watch him tinker at the piano and, finally, give a stonking performance of his glorious songs (apologies for the superlatives – I'm a huge fan). And we discover, too, that Warren Ellis is in fact a hoot.

"Nick Cave can't act" says co-writer/director, Jane Pollard, "but he is brilliant at being Nick Cave". Do we really know any more about him after seeing this film? I'd like to think so, but the man has so cleverly built up a mythology around himself that this, in collaboration with two creative film-makers, is very likely to be just another layer in his rock star mythology. In the end, it's a funny, gorgeous film with stunning live performances and a thoughtful take on creativity and performance. And would we really benefit from "knowing" the real Nick Cave anyway?

Julie McNamee

Fortean Times Verdict
GLIMPSES INTO THE CREATIVE MYTHOLOGIES OF MR CAVE **8**

Scintilla

Dir Billy O'Brien, UK 2014

Metrodome, £9.99 (DVD)

Jon Lynch stars as a grizzled mercenary employed to lead a bunch of other equally grizzled mercenaries to a subterranean facility somewhere in a former Soviet Army base in Eastern Europe. Their mission: to infiltrate the complex and extract material relating to genetic research as well as the scientist conducting it (Beth Winslet, looking like every man's favourite idea of a repressive in horn-rimmed spectacles). Except that our Beth isn't the only thing hunkering down in the complex, and one by one Powell's team are picked off as they progress deeper underground. Nor are the gas-mask-wearing, syringe-wielding creatures the worst things lurking below. Powell and his team should have known better as soon as they started stalking through a maze of *Doom*-like corridors.

Director Billy O'Brien wastes no time in getting down to business. No sooner have we met Powell in a prison cell, singing while being subjected to a bit of toenail torture, than we find ourselves involved in an assault rifle stroll through *Aliens* territory. The film's first half is a tense affair, but the swift plunge into the action means that character development suffers – unless Powell's tendency to take a packed lunch with him on such dangerous missions and ruminate while munching on a sarnie can be considered such. There are scares down below, along with some effective, gory moments, and in many ways *Scintilla* is a model of film-making economy. But at the movie's climactic shootout with hostile lifeforms and an army of vodka-swilling Russian baddies, the lack of budget tells: too much aftermath rather than actual carnage is shown on screen. With four writers involved in the script (including GP Taylor) the number of familiar SF and horror formulas involved don't always see eye to eye.

For most of its running time *Scintilla* is a watchable enough horror actioner, which ultimately needs more horror and action to make any lasting impact.

Nick Cirkovic

Fortean Times Verdict

HORROR ACTIONER NEEDS MORE HORROR AND ACTION **5**

THE REVEREND'S REVIEW

FT's resident man of the cloth **REVEREND PETER LAWS** dons his dog collar and faces the flicks that Church forgot! (www.theflicksthatchurchforgot.com; @revpeterlaws)

THE HP LOVECRAFT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

www.cthulhulives.org

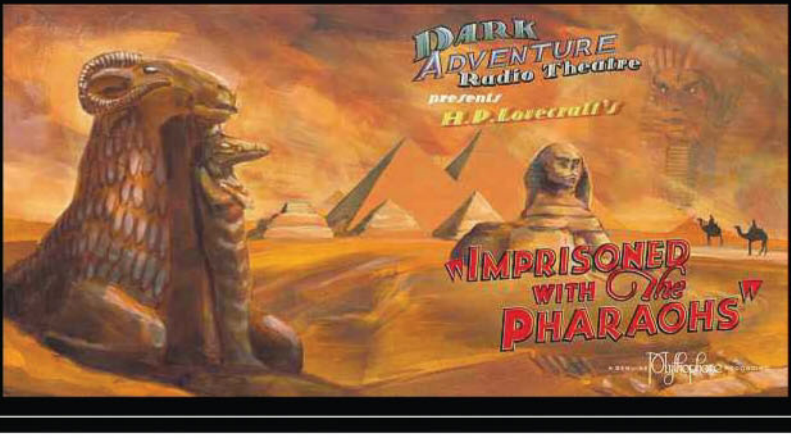
Who knows, maybe it is possible to be a 'casual' fan of writer HP Lovecraft, but from what I've see (and experienced myself) the king of cosmic horror often inspires nothing short of cult-like devotion in his readers. Perhaps none show the obsession with quite as much love and invention as the HP Lovecraft Historical Society, based in California. Under the banner of cthulhulives.org they pump out a stream of mythos-related merchandise, from rock operas and Christmas albums to Miskatonic University hoodies and carved statues of the Great Old Ones. But of particular interest are their faux-vintage film and audio versions of Lovecraft's stories. Their feature length take on 'Call of Cthulhu', for example, is superb. Not least because it opts for a style notably absent from modern horror: silent expressionism. The result is a hypnotic, haunting vision of manic Louisiana cultists and the inhuman geometry of the lost of city of R'Yleh. This is Cthulhu as it was meant to be seen; or rather how Lovecraft himself might have seen it, had anyone made a movie of it in his day. Most recently the HPLHS have gone all modern and released a black and white talkie: *The Whisperer in the Darkness*. Here a folklorist (brilliantly played by underrated actor Matt Foyer) braves the farmlands of Vermont to investigate weird leaping creatures in the woods. It's gripping stuff, particularly the first half. Hardcore fans might sniff at the newly added third act but I thought it was a hoot. *FT* readers will be tickled too: our very own Charles Fort turns up as a key character, wiggling his moustache and proclaiming that the supernatural really does exist. Of course, he turns out to be right. Presented on Blu-ray the film looks and sounds fantastic, with some absorbing extras too.

The cosmic terror continues with the 'Dark Adventure Theatre' series: old time radio style adaptions of selected Lovecraft works (nine releases so far). The music and mock sponsors really stoke up the period mood – you feel like gathering your family around the speakers to listen to this stuff – and the voice acting and sound design make for some chilling moments. The shows are available to download, but it's really worth considering getting the CD versions for their added content. Crack open the case and you'll see vintage props relating to each story. From authentic looking newspaper cuttings and notebook scribblings to vintage postcards and paraphernalia. You want an eye for detail? 'The Shadow over Innsmouth' set comes with a matchbook from the Gilman Hotel (the fishy inn from the story). All but one of the matches have been used... and it smells recently struck. I think I had a Lovecraftian nerdgasm at that point.

Lovecraft remains one of the most inspirational horror writers on the planet, despite having died in poverty and obscurity. Perhaps when the stars are right and Old Ones eventually do return, they might mention to him that his nightmares live on. Because there's something about his mythos that is relentlessly hungry: it simply refuses to stop consuming generation after generation.

Fortean Times Verdict

DARK ADVENTURES BROUGHT TO LIFE BY THE HPLHS **9**



Dark Adventure Radio Theatre
presents
H.P. Lovecraft's
"The Dreams in the Witch House"

Dark Adventure Radio Theatre
presents
H.P. Lovecraft's
2
"The Case of Charles Dexter Ward"

The Quiet Ones

Dir John Pogue, UK 2014

Lionsgate. £12.99 (Blu-ray), £10.99 (DVD)

The Quiet Ones, John Pogue's supernatural horror, is the latest offering from Hammer Films. Set in 1974, it stars Jared Harris as Professor Joseph Coupland who recruits young film maker Brian McNeil to document experiments setting out to prove that the apparent demonic possession of disturbed teenager Jane Harper has a more scientific explanation: that humans are capable of manifesting their internal emotional energies by external projection. The cult background to Jane's disturbed nature is mirrored in the seemingly blind following of Coupland by his university acolytes when he is kicked out of Oxford for his increasingly extreme methods; these border on the outright abuse of his subject, something only the relative outsider Brian seems to identify as he grows closer to Jane by the day. Coupland decamps with his student researchers to a conveniently creepy and secluded country retreat to continue his experiments. As the phenomena triggered in Jane by his investigations cause increasingly life-threatening outcomes, Coupland is forced to re-evaluate his professorial rationale.

Sadly, Olivia Cooke's portrayal of Jane Harper isn't sufficiently nuanced to effect any real chills, but it's not her fault. The three-handed script makes the fatal mistake of 'stepping out of the house' too often to create the sort of claustrophobic intensity a film like this – think of *The Haunting* – needs. Interweaving 'historic' documentary footage of Coupland's previous experiments with the ongoing events isn't particularly spooky, nor are the happenings in the house imbued sufficiently with a growing sense of dread. Instead, as the film heads towards its conclusion in one isolated, tension-severing set piece after another, it relies on visual horror and jump-inducing noise to reach its climax. There's a cracking little frightener screaming to get out here, but *The Quiet Ones* never really finds its voice.

Nick Cirkovic

Fortean Times Verdict

HAMMER'S LATEST IS NOTHING TO SHOUT ABOUT **5**

Under the Skin

Dir Jonathan Glazer, UK 2014

Studiocanal. £14.99 (Blu-ray), £12.99 (DVD)

It's said that when Jack Kirby was creating the world-consuming alien being Galactus he'd been worrying about the possible outcome of humankind's first meeting with extraterrestrial beings: might they not just eat us? Lower down the food chain, the alien visitors to Earth in *Under the Skin* bring to mind one of Charles Fort's playful speculations in *The Book of the Damned*: "I think we're property".

In Jonathan Glazer's disturbing film, Scarlett Johannson is one of the landowners, 'disguised' as an attractive young female, visiting Earth to harvest humans for what appears to be consumption by her race. Why she chose Glasgow is anybody's guess, but – as shot by Daniel Landin with a gaze as impassive and objectifying as ScarJo's blank alien stare – the city's grim, rainswept streets are a compellingly bleak presence as she cruises around picking up single men and luring them back to her pool of otherworldy goo on the promise of sex. Frankly, the mesmerising Ms Johannson would be hard to turn down; her unfortunate victims are mostly played by non-actors and filmed with hidden cameras, which adds to the film's unsettling sense of everyday reality being subtly compromised by the inexplicable. Eventually, one encounter causes Johannson to reassess her predatory relationship with the human race and she finds herself on the run from her fellow motorcyclist aliens; at least I assume that's what they are, but in a film that prefers to show not tell, such information is not vouchsafed the viewer.

Under the Skin's technical achievements and complex central performance are worthy of the highest praise; it's visually compelling (the camera loves Johannson unreservedly) and memorably chilling; that said, there are times when Glazer's slavish devotion to arthouse tropes makes for a somewhat opaque and insubstantial, if undeniably atmospheric, experience.

David Sutton

Fortean Times Verdict

A LUMINOUS SCARLETT JOHANSSON FALLS TO EARTH **8**

SHORTS

THE LAST KEEPERS

Metrodome, £8.99 (DVD)

Yet another in the ever-lengthening line of *Twilight* variants, Maggie Greenwald's *The Last Keepers* is unfortunately not bad enough to be enjoyably naff; it's just bad. Instead of vampires or werewolves, the film revolves around three generations of witches, embodied by Olympia Dukakis, Virginia Madsen, and Zosia Mamet as confused teenager Rhea, who has trouble coming to terms with her legacy. It's the usual 'teen discovers hidden power' tale, packed with recognisable faces (Aidan Quinn among them) clearly slumming it in this uncharismatic nonsense. Even the most undiscriminating teen surely deserves better. **Brian J Robb** **3/10**

FAUST

Eureka, £19.99 (Dual Format)

Horror fans will best know German director FW Murnau for his iconic 1922 Dracula adaptation *Nosferatu*. Yet in some ways, his version of *Faust* is the more unsettling film. It's certainly more ambitious visually, with some stunning set pieces and wonderful special effects. The classic tale of Mephistopheles trying to corrupt poor old Faust over a bet with an archangel feels ghoulish and dangerous here. Shots of the huge winged demon standing over a town just before he flings down pestilence on the people really is the stuff of nightmares. For my money, it's best watched with the recently commissioned score by Timothy Brock which is both epic and scary. The HD print looks delicious too. **Rev PL** **8/10**

WEREWOLF RISING

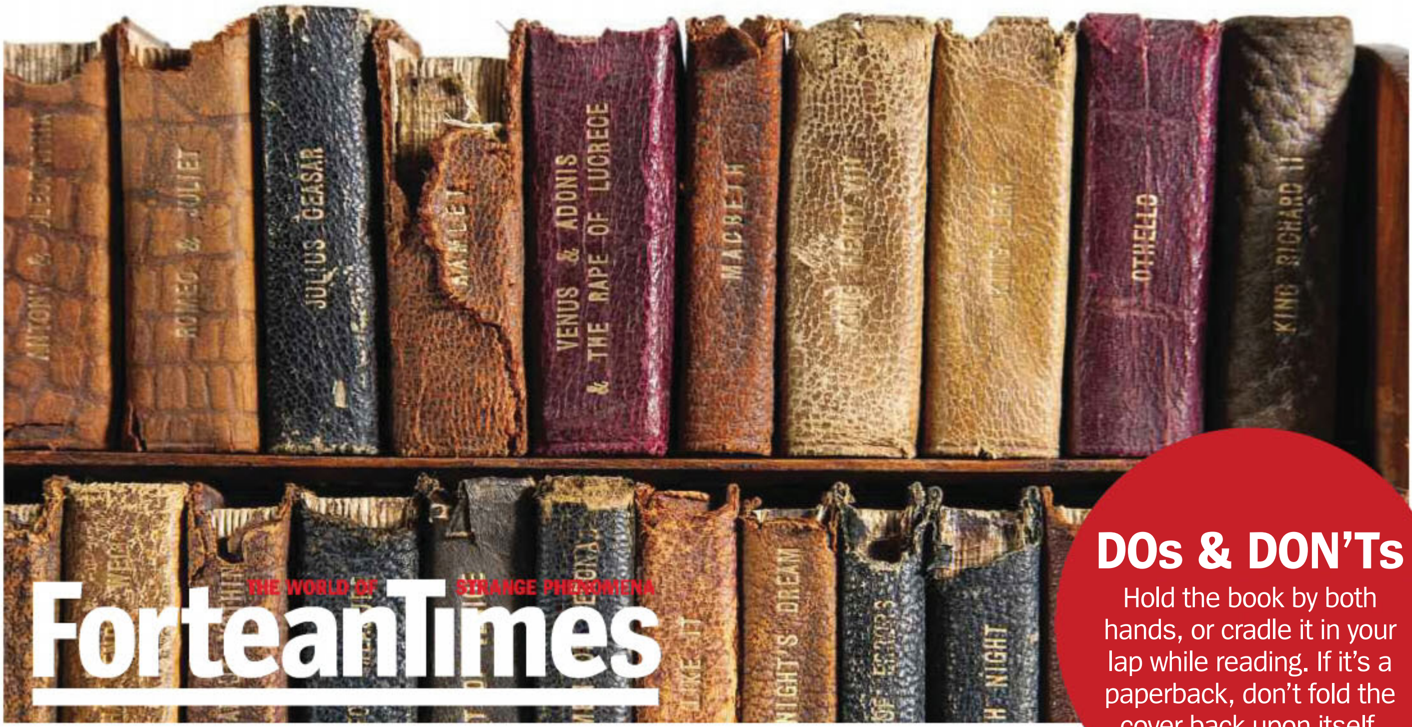
Image Entertainment, £9.99 (DVD)

Country girl Emma returns to her childhood home after a trip to the big city leaves her an alcoholic. Things get even more complicated when a couple of ex-prisoners and a werewolf start stomping about near her house. Hats off to the film makers for at least trying to make this seem cinematic – the opening aerial title sequence is decent enough – but almost immediately things deteriorate. The camerawork is weird and jittery and the acting occasionally hilarious. The score sounds like very early John Carpenter (by early I mean when he was three years old and playing a Bontempi organ). The twist ending leaves you shrugging and there's a completely pointless post credits sequence. Weirdly, I still sort of enjoyed this... but for all the wrong reasons. Coming to a pound shop near you. **Rev PL** **3/10**

RAPTURE

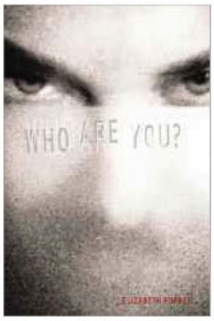
Eureka, £19.99 (Dual Format)

A forgotten oddity about the sexual awakening of a young French girl (Patricia Gozzzi) who falls for a fugitive (Dean Stockwell) she thinks is a scarecrow she's brought to life; it starts as an effective and atmospheric gothic fairytale but gradually descends into run-of-the-mill melodrama. A sort of sexy, Gallic counterpart to *Whistle Down the Wind*, John Guillermin (*Towering Inferno*, *Death on the Nile*) never made anything else like this 1965 film. Visually it's a treat, boasting remarkable location cinematography from Marcel Grignon, who conjures up both urban alienation and hypnotic pastoral in striking black and white, all accompanied by a gorgeous Delerue score. **DS** **6/10**



LOVES GOOD BOOKS

DOs & DON'Ts
Hold the book by both hands, or cradle it in your lap while reading. If it's a paperback, don't fold the cover back upon itself.



WHO ARE YOU?

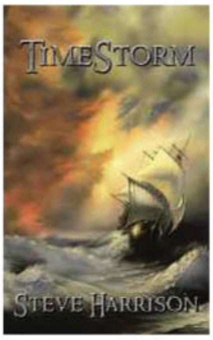
– ELIZABETH FORBES

Endorsed by Jake Wood, this excellently researched new book by Elizabeth Forbes explores the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder on a soldier who has returned from Afghanistan and his family. While it is clear to his wife Juliet that Alex is suffering from PTSD, he refuses to seek help through a misplaced sense of pride. The consequences of this are shattering as Alex rapidly comes to be a serious threat to the safety of his family. This is an intelligent look at one possible outcome of leaving PTSD unchecked, and a gripping, harrowing read to boot.

Cutting
Edge
Press

Who Are You? is available from all good bookshops and can be ordered online from Amazon and other e-tailers.

Cutting Edge Press | ISBN 9781908122735
Paperback, 320
£7.99



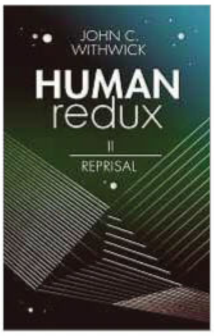
TIMESTORM

– STEVE HARRISON

In 1795 a convict ship, sailing from England to Australia, encounters a strange and savage storm. Miraculously, the battered ship survives and limps into Sydney Harbour, where the convicts rebel, overpower their guards and escape. While the crew attempts to track down and kill or recapture the escapees, seething resentments among the convicts fuel an appetite for brutal revenge against their former captors. But this ruthless life or death struggle is played out amidst the terrifyingly unfamiliar technology and unfathomable culture of a modern-day city, because these desperate men from the 18th century have arrived in Sydney in 2017.

Fortean Times readers can get the paperback for only £8.99 (RRP £9.99) with free p&p (UK mainland only). Go to our website to order at http://bit.ly/Elsewhen-Fortean

Elsewhen Press
ISBN 9781908168443 | 368 pages | £9.99
ISBN 9781908168542 | eBook edition | £2.99



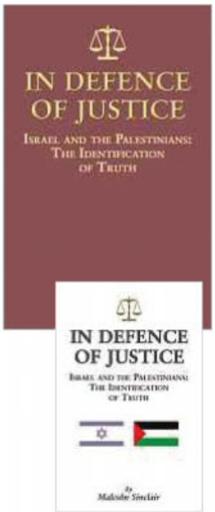
HUMANREDUX REPRISAL

– JOHN C. WITHWICK

"This isn't science fiction, it's science faction."
MERIDIAN RADIO LONDON
HUMANredux: REPRISAL is the second novel in the HUMANredux series. This is not your usual generic apocalyptic alien invasion novel. Instead it weaves elements of time-travel, the esoteric, ancient alien theory, real historical fact, Earth mysteries and good old fashioned sci-fi fun into a compelling and startling narrative. The third novel in the series, HUMANredux: ILLUMINATION will be available 14th December 2014.

Win one of three hour long sessions with the author on self-publishing and the merits an pitfalls. Email JohnCWithwick@outlook.com with proof of purchase.

Self Published by Author.
Exclusive to Amazon Kindle | £1.99 (Approx)



IRON KNIGHTS

– ROBIN BENNETT

"At long last a book which properly identifies and uses the truth against the propaganda machines of the west that seek to undermine the nation of israel"

"Fascinating book. i thought i was well informed but the book really showed up my lack of knowledge" p.r. (2013)

"An amazing and excellent book. simply written producing a clear overall picture" o.h. (2013)

"I found your book riveting, and i am sorry that it does not have a wider advertised publication, as it shoul.d. if i were in a position to do so financially, i would make sure it did. this book deserves far greater publicity. thank you……." w.g. (aug. 2014.)

Soft back:
ISBN-13: 978-0-9575197-1-8/ISBN-10: 0-9575197-1-0
Hard back:
ISBN-13: 978-0-9575197-0-1/ISBN-10: 0-9575197-0-2
NOT available on market websites.
Orders via: www.macuniversal.com

THEMED SETS ▲ SCREENINGS ▲ ART GALLERY ▲ FAN PANELS
TALKS ▲ AUTOGRAPHS ▲ PHOTOS ▲ PARTIES ▲ MUSEUM ▲ MEMORABILIA
PROPS ▲ COSTUME PARADE ▲ WORLD RECORD ▲ GAMING ZONE ▲ MERCHANDISE

DESTINATION STAR TREK™ 3

3 - 5 OCT 2014 ▲ LONDON ▲ ExCeL

BOOK YOUR TICKETS NOW!

WWW.DESTINATIONSTARTREK.COM

Experience the *STAR TREK* Universe all under one roof at Destination *STAR TREK* 3!

Terms & conditions apply. *Leonard Nimoy will only be appearing via a live video feed for a special one off talk. Available now via the Admiral & Captain ticket packages. Not all guests signing all days. Guests are charging for autographs. Guests appear subject to work commitments. For full terms and conditions please visit our website
™ & © 2014 CBS Studios Inc. © 2014 Paramount Pictures Corp. *STAR TREK* and related marks and logos are trademarks of CBS Studios Inc. All Rights Reserved

JOIN THE MISSION BEFORE YOUR TIME RUNS OUT...

*

3 - 5 OCT 2014 ▲ LONDON ▲ ExCeL

#DST3

A Media 10 event in association with SHOWMASTERS

BOOK YOUR TICKETS NOW!

Skendleby
Nick BROWN

Beneath the rolling Cheshire countryside dotted with the mansions of the rich and famous something buried for Millenia is beginning to stir.
Skendleby a Christmas haunting by Nick Brown author of Luck Bringer

" Gripping and genuinely creepy, it's an autumnal must-read." *New Edition Magazine: Skendleby*

First in the "Ancient Gramarye" series

Follow Nick Brown on Facebook https://www.facebook.com/NickBrownAuthor

Telephone: 07806 330119

Skendleby
Nick BROWN

ISBN 978-1-910053-20-1 available from Amazon and Waterstones and quality booksellers.

www.nickbrownbooks.com

THE WORLD OF STRANGE PHENOMENA
ForteanTimes

LOOKING TO BE PUBLISHED?
SUBMISSIONS AND SAMPLES WELCOMED.
ALL WORK CONSIDERED,
NO AGENT REQUIRED.

AUSTIN MACAULEY
PUBLISHERS LTD
CGC-33-01, 25 Canada Square
Canary Wharf, London, E14 5LQ
Tel: 0207 038 8212
www.austinmacauley.com
mail@austinmacauley.com

Experimentelle Fliegende Untertassen Korps
www.smdeeming.co.uk

Interstellar war is coming… will you be ready?

HISTORY THROUGH COINS

Home study photography courses with a stand-alone course on coin photography and their history. A must for new coin collectors

Support whilst you learn

Course material supplied on CD, USB or as download

Coins available for purchase

www.PhotographyCourseSelect.co.uk

AUTHORS
PLEASE SUBMIT:
synopsis, plus sample chapters (3) for consideration.
Olympia Publishers
www.olympiapublishers.com
60 Cannon Street, LONDON, EC4N 6NP

WOLFCHILDE.COM

FREE CONCEPT ALBUM

SWORDS IN ABUSERS

FREE eBOOK

on abuse cover ups.

Super affordable fold out postcard of the Patterson-Gimlin film site as it was pictured from 1968 to 2012.

THE PATTERSON-GIMLIN FILMSITE: 1968 TO 2012

Limited supply. Printed on super heavy stock: 100#. Limit TWO per customer. Payment to perez952@sbcglobal.net. Order only through PayPal. $4.95 each, postage included. Ships anywhere in the world.

letters

Synthetic statesman

I have just seen the following on the BBC news website: "DNA project 'to make UK world leader'". It's an abbreviated headline that made more sense when you clicked on the link, but my immediate reaction to seeing this was: "Haven't they come a long way since Dolly the sheep cloning horror".

Thank-you for such a wonderful informative, entertaining, educational and hilarious magazine.

Mark Ross
By email

Abney Hall

Jenny Randles's latest contribution 'Strange Stockport' [**FT317:27**] mentions Abney Hall; I was brought up in the area (Bramhall/Cheadle Hulme) and worked in Heaton Mersey, not far from the hall. The mention of Abney reminded me of a tale told by a colleague who, as a child, played in the grounds of the then derelict building. On one occasion, he and a friend observed a man emerging from the entrance, which they did not see him open. The figure glared at them, and they instantly knew he was 'evil'. Terrified, they ran and never went back. My colleague described a definite air of menace about the man, and said he "looked real but wasn't".

Steve Turnbull
Choppington, Northumberland

Merry trickery

Regarding Gail-Nina Anderson's thought-provoking footnote to the apparent "pastime" of organised assaults against women [**FT316:70**]; Maxim Gorky recorded a similar thing in 19th-century Russia. In the Penguin translation of *My Universities* (1979), we find the following: "The boys treated the girls with a blatant cynicism and played all kinds of dirty tricks on them. They would catch them out in the fields, lift their skirts up and tie the hems tight with a piece of bast right up over their heads. This was known as 'turning a girl into a flower'" (p. 119). Gorky speculates that some young women "found this sport pleasant", but to me the prospect of a public de-bagging does not appeal, even if it is the neighbours doing it. It seems from the term given to the practice that this was a recognised "pastime". Such was, and unfortunately still is, the treatment of some women in some societies, with miscreants cloaking themselves with the disguise of the supernatural or "merry trickery".

Lewis JW Hurst
Edinburgh

Unholy rollers

I was very interested in Simon Young's article [**FT315:25**] and Gareth Hughes's subsequent letter [**FT317:70–71**] about the weird entity known as 'The Wool Roller'. I've done some recent research on this figure myself, for an upcoming book about the interface that exists between fairies and ghosts (*The Hidden Folk*, CFZ Press) and found that, surprisingly, such things have allegedly been sighted during a select few poltergeist hauntings, too.

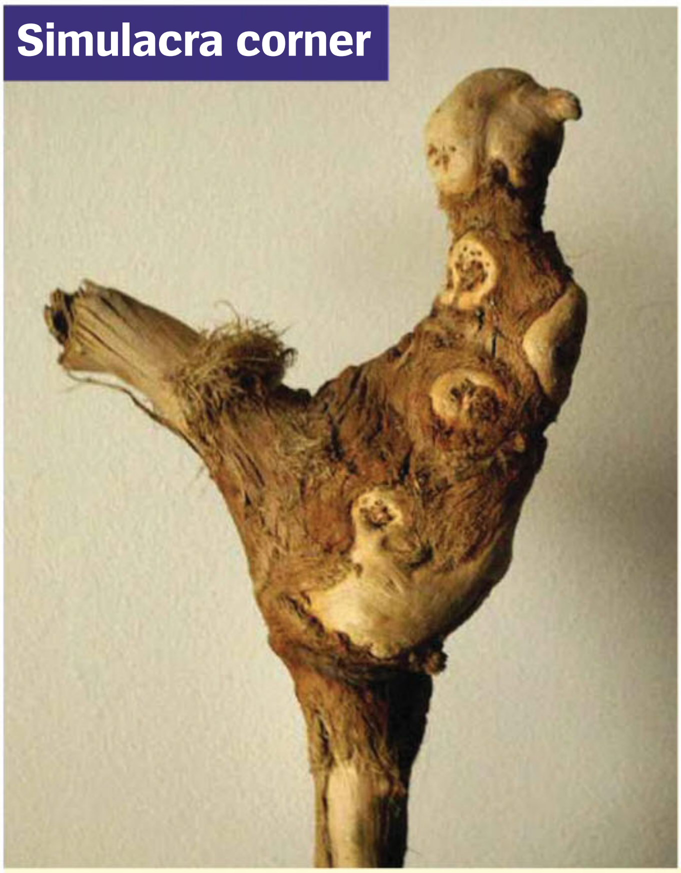
During the infamous Bell Witch case, for instance, the spook supposedly announced its temporary departure when "something like a cannon-ball" rolled out of that traditional fairy-haunt the chimney, before "bursting" in a cloud of smoke whilst the Ghost-Witch's disembodied voice said it would return in seven years. When the spirit did indeed come back, one autumn afternoon in 1828, the Bell family's hall supposedly filled up with black smoke. When this cleared, "a black ball as large as a water bucket, seemingly composed of black wool" rolled "softly" across the hall floor, scooted away into the fireplace, then *up* through the chimney-breast! Good old Nandor Fodor, everyone's favourite Freudian parapsychologist, said these events were "highly symbolic of guilt-release" on behalf of one of the Witch's victims, though quite how heavy ordnance and balls of black wool equate to dubiously-evidenced psychosexual guilt-complexes escapes me.

One version of a poltergeist haunting at a remote Welsh farm in around 1700 or so, meanwhile, in which an invisible *bwca* (Welsh for 'puck') supposedly spoke out of thin air, knocked on doors and threw stones around, holds that the fairy-spook could only make its way to the haunted farm in question by travelling through the countryside in the shape of a possessed ball of wool, highly unlikely though this may seem.

Both the Welsh case and the Bell Witch affair, while they *appear* to have had genuine poltergeist hauntings at their core, were each massively embellished by tale-tellers over the years, and it may well be that no 'Wool Rollers' were genuinely seen in either case, these details being added later. Nonetheless, it's very interesting that such fairy-like elements should be appended to what most people in modern times would now say were ghosts, not the Little People. These were the only two cases of this specific phenomenon I could discover in relation to polts, but I suspect there are more to be uncovered by intrepid researchers.

SD Tucker
Widnes, Cheshire

Simulacra corner



Giselle Ladouceur found this driftwood bird on the shore of Lake Ontario in Canada.

We are always glad to receive pictures of spontaneous forms and figures, or any curious images. Send them to the PO Box above (with a stamped addressed envelope or international reply coupon) or to sieveking@forteantimes.com – and please tell us your postal address.

letters

Nevada white sphere

I'm reading John McPhee's 1981 book *Basin and Range* (ISBN 0374109141), a wonderful popular exposition of geology. McPhee was (may still be) a staff writer on the *New Yorker*, and a "pioneer of creative nonfiction" according to Wikipedia.

The book is Loren Eiseley-ish in tone, with just a whiff of the cynical-intellectual *New Yorker* worldview, and not particularly fortean; but bang in the middle of the Deep Time and field-trip stuff he slips in a genuine first-hand UFO encounter (p. 165):

"In the dark, we drove back the way we had come, over the painted cattle guards [stripes painted on the road] and past jackrabbits dancing in the road, pitch-dark, and suddenly a Black Angus was there, standing broadside, middle of the road. With a scream of brakes, we stopped. The animal stood still, thinking, its eyes unmoving – a wall of beef. We moved slowly after that, and even more slowly when a white sphere materialized on our right in the moonless sky. It expanded some, like a cloud. Its light became so bright that we stopped finally and looked up in awe. A smaller object, also spherical, moved out from within the large one, possibly from behind it. There was a Saturn-like ring around the smaller sphere. It moved here and there beside the large one for a few minutes and then went back inside.

"The story would be all over the papers the following day. The *Nevada State Journal* would describe a 'Mysterious Ball of Light' that had been reported by various people at least a hundred miles in every direction from the place where we had been. 'By this time we decided to get the hell out of there', a couple of hunters reported, 'and hopped in our pickup and took off. As we looked at it, we saw a smaller craft come out of the right lower corner. This smaller craft had a dome in the middle of it and two wings on either side, but the whole thing was oval-shaped.' Someone else had said, 'I thought it was an optical illusion at first, but it just kept coming closer and closer so that I could see it wasn't an illusion. Then something started coming out of the side of it. It looked like a star, and then a ring formed around it. A kind of ring like you'd see around Saturn. It didn't make any noises, and then it vanished.'

"'Now we're both believers,' said one of the hunters. 'And I don't ever want to see another one. We're pretty good-sized men and ain't scared of nothing except for snakes and now flying saucers.'

"After the small sphere disappeared [McPhee goes on], the large one rapidly faded and also disappeared. Deffeyes and I were left on the roadside among the starlighted eyes of dark and motionless cattle. 'Copernicus took the world out of the center of the universe,' he said. 'Hutton took us out of a special place somewhere near the beginning of things and left us awash in the middle of the immensity of time. An extraterrestrial civilization could show us where we are with regard to the creation of life.'"

The most interesting aspect of this account is the "hundred miles in every direction". If I understand him correctly, the phenomenon was stationary.

This indicates that it was too high up to be atmospheric in origin. Then again, it could be a secret nuclear test in space.

Nils Erik Grande
Oslo, Norway

INHUMAN RESOURCES
The Surreal McCoy

THE SURREAL MCCOY

George's gnashers

I think I can help with the Mythconception about George Washington having wooden teeth **[FT317:23]**. It may be an urban legend stemming from the popular joke: "Who was George Washington Carver? The guy who made George Washington's wooden teeth!" George Washington Carver was actually a scientist and polymath, and the joke doesn't work if the teeth are made of anything else. If you want to see someone reeling off the joke with the appropriate relish, it's on The Reduced Shakespeare Company's "Complete History of America (Abridged)".

James Wright
By email

Shadowy nudge

Years ago, I inherited my father's old copy of *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations*, which has languished dusty upon my shelf, unregarded for perhaps a decade or more. The other morning, I felt the sudden urge to pick up the volume. I randomly opened it and my gaze fell upon this decidedly fortean verse:

Beyond the bright searchlights of science,
Out of sight of the windows of sense,
Old riddles still bid us defiance,
Old questions of Why and of Whence.
(William Cecil Dampier-Whetham, 1904)

Of course, this was no mere coincidence. My subscription to *Fortean Times* is in danger of lapsing, and Old Dampier-Whetham was giving me a gentle nudge from the shadows beyond. Duly noted.

Andy Asp
Oakland, California

Mysterious combustion

As a subscriber to this illustrious publication from its beginning, we particularly enjoyed the mix in **FT315**.

"Classical Corner 176: Flaming Nora" **[FT315:17]** – the quintessential SHC death photograph of John Bentley (to which we hold copyright) is printed backwards – can be expanded to include more literary incorporation of SHC as a frightening (often moral) plot device: for example, the "animal combustion" of William the Testy in Washington Irving's *A History of New York* (1809); Jacob's mother in Frederick Marryat's *Jacob Faithful* (1834); an anonymous male in Balzac's *Le Cousin Pons* (1847); and the shanghaied sailor Saveda in Melville's *Redburn: His First Voyage* (1849), whose "cadaverous face was crawled over by a swarm of worm-like... soft blue flame, wore an aspect of grim defiance, and eternal death. Prometheus, blast by fire on the rock."

By the way, Fort errs in writing of "things, or beings, that with a flaming process mostly pick out women." Of the hundreds of victims chronicled in our book *ABLAZE!* that suggest SHC, 50 per cent are female; 47 per cent male; three per cent gender not recorded. Gender is neither a predictor of – nor protection from – the spon-com experience.

Laursen and Cropper's superb "The Baldoon Mystery" **[FT315:30–39]** details just one of scores of paranormal (non-human) spontaneous combustions that remain disregarded by mainstream fire science. Overlooked are two salient/noteworthy facts buried in the contemporaneous account by the *Detroit Gazette*: that "candles burnt blue" and that "the pranks of some invisible and mischievous visitor, whose gambols were repeated during several nights, and at the habitations of several farmers."

This suggests 1) a correlation to the many observed cases befitting historical SHC whose 'flames' are reported as (bright electric-arc) blue; 2) the phenomena bedevilling the McDonalds were *not* restricted to themselves – hence negating in this instance, we suggest, the modern "pretty young girl" as poltergeist-agent; see the Jennie Bramwell and Rhoda Colwell cases (*Wild Talents*, chaps 13 & 25). How afar this "invisible and mischievous visitor" roamed and what it did at/to the McDonalds' neighbours will undoubtedly forever be unknown, sadly.

It recalls, though, the incendiary enigma we investigated in 1983 that focused on the Rev Gene Clemons's family but engendered additional thermal/electrical anomalies that defined a pair of mile-wide circles around Wharncliffe, West Virginia [**FT44:43–44**]. Such enigmatic enflamings call for an expansive perspective if, ever, these "zone phenomena" (Fort's term in *Lo!*) are to be explained.

ABLAZE! adds dozens more examples of strange flaming fates from antiquity, including the unnerving peculiarity that afflicted the Ostrogoth king Theodoric the Great (c. AD 454–526) whose regal body, when rubbed, emitted flames; and of Maximinius who, according to the 4th-cent historian Eusebius in his *Hist. Ecclesiastica* (Lib. IX), had flesh consumed "with a secret fire from Heaven, so that it was burnt, and little by little, turned to ashes. There was no more any shape of man to be seen in him..."

Given the astonishing range of quirky human biology chronicled in "Odd allergy round-up" [**FT315:8–9**] – including two (Rachel Prince and Tracy Kenny) whose allergies produce 1st- and 2nd-degree burns (aka SHC) – we remain perplexed by the vehement opposition to SHC that orthodox forensics – and, for that matter, the BBC – irrationally debunk as "myth" and "superstition" and "the human-wick effect." Measuring the circle (literally in West Virginia) of curious combustions commands consideration and contemplation, not derision and dismissal.

Larry E Arnold
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

One-eyed Joan

Simon Young's interesting articles on "Fairies, folklore and forteana" included [**FT316:25**] an account of Joan Tyrry's dealings with the fairies in the 16th century, and how she lost the sight of one eye when she recognised a fairy in Taunton market and spoke to him. As Young says, this seems to be a version of a story, otherwise known mostly from 19th-century sources, in which a fairy, outraged that anyone can see him, asks which eye she sees him by, and blinds her in that eye. Young writes: "The earliest reference I can find to such a story dates back to the 18th century; yet, here we are, in the 16th century with the same essential plot."

It is not, however, the earliest occurrence of the story – by a long way. The "blinding" episode often appears as the culmination of a longer tale, in which a woman who has been of service to the fairies (either as midwife, or by nursing a fairy baby) had wiped one eye with an ointment or potion that allowed her to see clearly in the fairy world. On returning to our world, she sees a fairy, usually stealing items from a market stall, and makes the mistake of revealing that she can see him. The fairy then blinds the eye so that she loses her fairy sight.

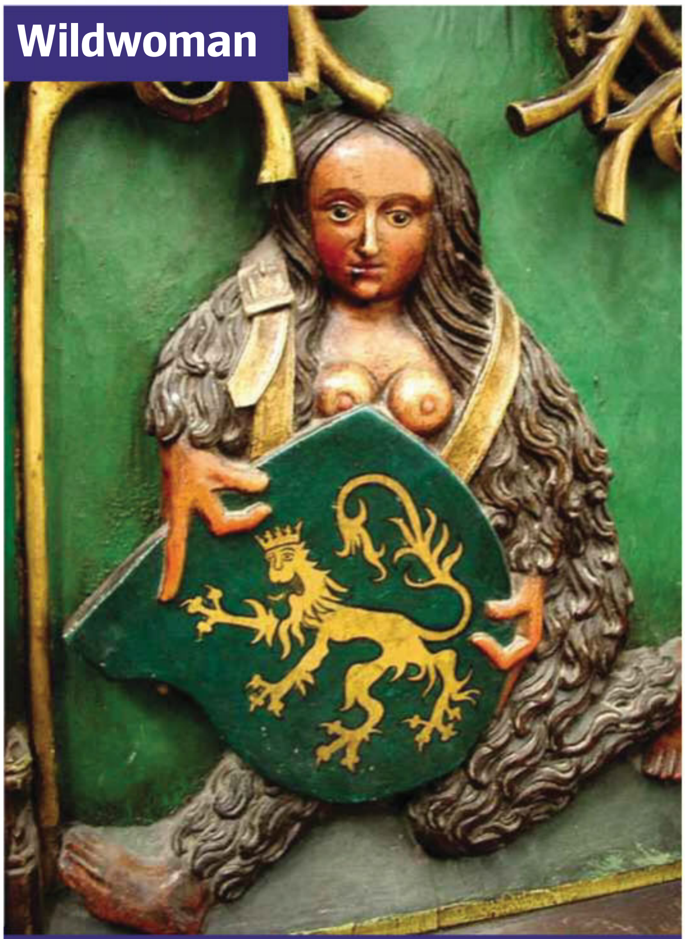
That story goes back at least to the early 13th century, when it was included by Gervase of Tilbury in his *Otia Imperialia* ("Imperial Pastimes"), a massive compendium of history, geography, tall tales and wonders completed in about 1215, and addressed to the Holy Roman Emperor Otto IV.

Although he was born in Essex, as his name suggests, Gervase was widely travelled, and it was in the South of France that he heard about the *Dracs*, the fairy-folk who lived at the bottom of the river Rhône. Gervase tells us that it was the practice of these Dracs to abduct nursing mothers (*feminæ lactantes*) to nurse the Dracs' own wretched offspring (*proles infelix*). Gervase met one of these women, who had, she told him, accidentally got fat in her eye from an eel-pasty given to her by one of the Dracs, and found it allowed her to see clearly in their underwater world. On her return to the normal human world after seven years, she had seen a Drac in the market place in Beaucaire, and had innocently greeted him and asked him for news of her old mistress and the child. The Drac had thereupon blinded her in the eye with which she saw him.

Was this the original story, or was the unfortunate woman in Beaucaire, like one-eyed Joan of Taunton 350 years later, already "living a fairy tale"?

John Clark
London

Wildwoman

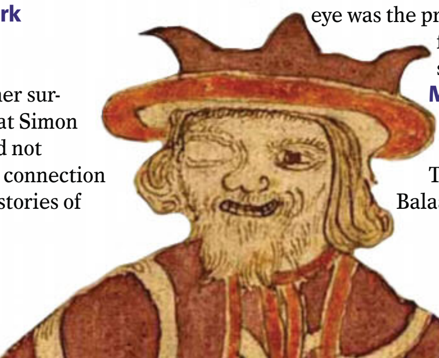


I was intrigued by Matt Salusbury's feature on woodwoses/wodewoses in Suffolk [**FT318:28–33**], and dug out this image of a female wodewose, what we might call a 'wodewosette". I don't recall where it is from; presumably some church or manor house. Does anyone recognise it?

Angus Crowe, *Cambridge*

I was rather surprised that Simon Young did not make the connection between stories of people being blinded in one eye by the fairies for being able to see them and the myth of Odin. Odin sacrificed one eye at the well of Mimir in order to gain wisdom (*Prose Edda*, Gylfaginning 15; *Elder Edda*, Voluspa 28). Far from "living a fairy tale", it seems to me that Joan Tyrry and others were embodying a story passed down through Norse and Anglo-Saxon mythology, possibly in a confused form: that the loss of sight in one eye was the price to be paid for supernatural sight/wisdom.

Martin Jenkins
London



The biblical seer Balaam (Numbers 22–24) is understood in the Talmud (completed around AD 570) to have been blind in one eye (Sanhedrin 105a). The irony is that while in the stories related by Simon Young the one-eyed person can see the magical world, Balaam could not see the angel. I think the Talmud might be making an ironic comment about Balaam: normally people with one eye can see the magical world, but he could not. This seems to be a cross-cultural idea, like Odin sacrificing one eye for wisdom, and Kenneth MacKenzie (the Brahan Seer), also blind in one eye, but could see the future (Bob Curran, *Mysterious Celtic Mythology in American Folklore*, p. 143).

Zvi Ron
By email

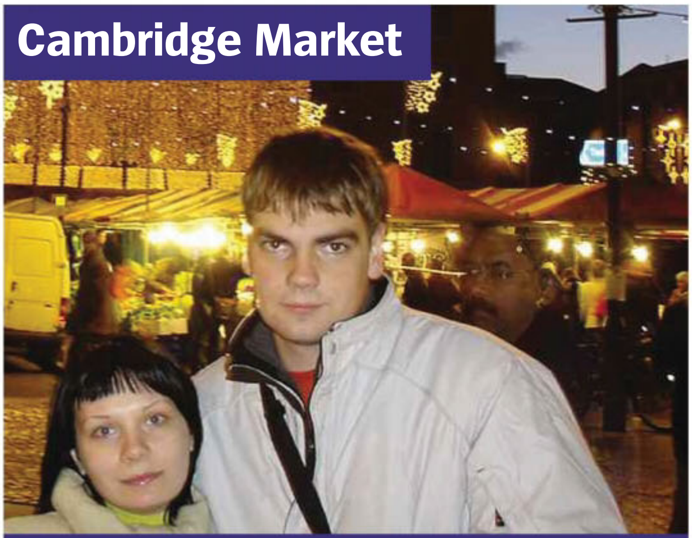
Martian comments

I hadn't realised there was quite so much excitement regarding the planet Mars around the turn of the 19th/20th century. ("From Paddington to the Planet Mars", **FT315:28–29**). Having recently re-read Edgar Rice Burroughs's Martian stories, the first of which was published in 1911, not so many years later than the events referenced in *FT*, I wonder if he had read these "revelations" and if he was in part inspired by them. For instance, ERB's Martian beast of burden is the zitidar, a mammoth-like creature, and his initial hero, John Carter, finds himself on Mars via a kind of astral projection, as indeed does another (Ulysses Paxton). As against that, the photographs of the two "Martians" show them swathed in white sheets [**FT315:29**], while ERB's Martians were naked except for a leather harness to hold their several weapons. (*John Carter of Mars*, the movie, was disappointingly inaccurate in this respect, with Dejah Thoris – comparatively speaking – overdressed, and John Carter sporting a bizarre oversized brown kilt.)

- Mars is also relevant to Greg May's letter "UFOs and Satan" [**FT315:74**]. In *Let There Be Light*, his 1958 history of astronomy, Rudolph Thiel noted that in the Middle Ages "Martian Devils had been seen in the air at night, brownish-red, ugly creatures with horns and hooked talons, in constant movement." So at a time when the notion of anything in flight would exclude a mechanism, unidentified flying things were interpreted as spirits; today, when mechanical flying things are the norm, they are interpreted as engineered flying objects. It's the way the brain works – things not perceived with enough certainty to be sure of identification are pigeonholed according to unconscious best guess, which will depend on previous experience and expectations. So, while noting that a fair number even of evangelical Christians may be unconvinced that UFOs are demons, it might well be worth bearing the opinion in mind when considering UFO phenomena. Our cultural prejudices encourage us to interpret them as either meteorological/astronomical phenomena or possible alien engineered artefacts. But what if they don't all have these "natural" explanations?

Alan Donnelly
Thetford, Norfolk

Cambridge Market



This photo was taken at the end of November 2009 in Cambridge market, using a Sony Cybershot digital camera. What do you make of the semi-transparent man with glasses and a moustache? His head appears to obscure one of the lights in the market stall behind him.
Ivan Sharp, *Norwich, Norfolk*

Notorious Clophill

Alan Murdie states: "The likely perpetrators [at Clophill] were teenagers rather than serious practitioners of the dark arts" [**FT316:18**]. However, Eric Maple, in his book *Supernatural England* (1977), claims a pamphlet alluding to such activities was published in the area around 1910 (p.113), and this is seconded by Tony Broughall and Paul Adams in their *Two Haunted Counties: A Ghost Hunter's Companion in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire* (2010, pp.35f).

Alex Duggan and Michael York's image has antecedents too. In 1972 Tony Broughall and his wife took several black-and-white photographs of Clophill church, and claimed to make out a bowed white figure standing several feet off the ground in the south window. The shot is certainly eerie, given its 'retro' fuzziness and the place's reputation. But the 'ghost' looks to me like a simulacrum of light and shade created by blurry monochrome, and reminds me of a 'Virgin Mary' from Metz (Melvin Willin, *Ghosts Caught On Film*, 2007, pp.56f).

In the same year, Janet and Colin Bord visited the Clophill site and felt "overwhelming evil": one of the photographs they took was streaked with unexplained patches of mist (Janet Bord, letter to *Paranormal* magazine #34, April 2009, p.79). More recently, a videotape described on a Clophill website captured "what looked at first like a deformed, dancing gravestone, but resolved into a white figure", at which point another viewer claimed to hear a "faint but horrible wailing".

Clophill is not alone in local notoriety. Broughall and Adams (*op. cit*., p.90) claim the ruined church at Ayot St Lawrence was used for black magic purposes in the early 1970s. More recently, the remains at Tundridge, near Puckeridge, have gained an evil reputation: the *Hertfordshire Mercury* published a headline a few years ago: "Destroy This Church – It's Nothing But Trouble!" Clophill St Mary's even has a haunted twin on its doorstep at Segenhoe, just off the M1 (Leigh Driver, *The Lost Villages of England*, 2006, pp.74f).

Hertfordshire witch Lois Bourne may be referring to activities at one of these sites in her autobiography, *Witch Amongst Us* (1979): "I was at a party and was introduced to a rather wild-looking young man, and my host said, 'You might find him interesting, Lois, he was involved with a Satanist group at one time' [..] He described one experience that I found rather grisly and a bit distasteful. A ritual was conducted in a cemetery, a grave dug up, the corpse removed and resuscitated. It apparently spoke and prophesied" (p.131). A few words from Aleister Crowley, quoting Eliphas Levi: "Evil ceremonies are a true intellectual poison: they do evoke the powers of hallucination and madness as surely does hashish." (*Moonchild*, 1929, p.205). Or henbane, often burned at necromantic rites.

There are a couple of amusing links to Rollo Ahmed [**FT316:28–35, 317:42–47**] in all this. According to Damien O'Dell in *Haunted Bedfordshire* (2004), one of Clophill's many rectors, Horace Rollo Meyer, was the father of Rollo John Oliver Meyer who played cricket for Somerset (p.10). Secondly, on the *Paranormal Diaries* DVD issued in 2013 by Second Sight, a group from Luton spending the night at Clophill church utilised a 'ghost box', a modified radio rapidly scanning through channels, to communicate with the dead. The risk of psychoacoustic illusions here is massive, even by the standards of EVP, so a cellar of salt is needed. However, at first listening I, unlike the group, heard a man's voice say "Ahmed"… Which brings us back to Rollo Ahmed's own words about Black Masses being held "once or twice a year, usually in the deserted ruins of churches or in some cavernous place in a remote position…" [**FT316:30**].

I have my own theory as to why the Clophill location elicits such strong reactions. Infrasound, it has been suggested, can cause people to experience cold chills and a sense of unease, and these low-frequency sounds can be caused by wind blowing down a tunnel or corridor (Ciaran O'Keefe, Yvette Fielding, *Most Haunted*, 2006, p.321). One approaches Clophill St Mary's through a long tunnel of overarching trees. And the church is on top of a hill. Is there something about climbing to a monument that causes eerie feelings? Is Clophill a demonic counterpart to Glastonbury Tor?

Richard George
St Albans, Hertfordshire

it happened to me...

Have you had strange experiences that you cannot explain?
We are always interested in reading of odd events and occurrences.
CONTACT US BY POST: **FORTEAN TIMES, BOX 2409, LONDON, NW5 4NP**
OR E-MAIL TO **sieveking@forteantimes.com**
Or post your message on the **www.forteantimes.com** message board.

First-hand accounts of goings-on from *FT* readers and browsers of www.forteantimes.com

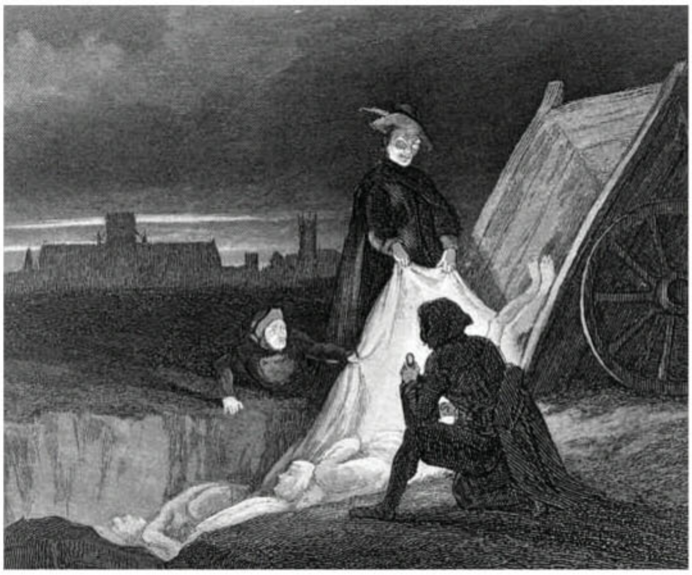
Plague pit horror

The incident I am about to describe took place in 1934 or 1935, when I was 10 or 11. In those days, children in remote rural areas had to make their own entertainment. The summer evenings were no problem, but the long dark autumn and winter evenings were another matter. There was one game we could play – in fact it could only be played in the dark. We called it "Jack, Jack, show a light". I don't know whether it was unique to our village; I've certainly never heard it mentioned elsewhere. There were about a dozen of us boys in the village aged between 10 and 14, and this seemed about the right number for the game.

Basically, it was hide and seek in the dark, but more fun. It was played over a wide area and confined by strict boundaries – a hedgerow here, the spinney there, the church, river and so on – the whole area being about a quarter of a mile square. One of us would set off; then after a few minutes' start, the rest would take up the chase, usually in twos and threes. To find anyone in such a large area in the dark would have been virtually impossible, especially as the 'hunted' was constantly on the move, so he carried a torch which he was obliged to flash every few minutes. Hence the name of the game.

One evening it was my turn to be the 'hunted', and after a time I found myself at the boundary of the game, hiding in some bushes beside a natural depression in the ground that looked like it had once been a pit. It had been almost filled in so that its surface, overgrown with nettles and brambles, was more or less flat and only a few feet below the level of the surrounding ground. Although we knew practically every inch of the fields and hedgerows in and around the village, this was a place we instinctively avoided. We never explored its gloomy, sunless interior; birds seemed to avoid it just as we did.

My pursuers came close, then moved off. I was about to move in the opposite direction when I became aware of company. It wasn't a really dark night, as I remember; probably a half-moon, light enough anyway to see two figures emerge some 10 to 15 yards [9–14m] away on the opposite side of the depression. One was pushing what appeared to be a large wheelbarrow while the other had two pitchforks over his shoulder while with his free hand he assisted in pushing the barrow. (I didn't realise they were pitchforks until later.) Both figures were male; their jackets or jerkins were belted at the waist, and I think they wore long stockings up to their knees. The thing that stands out most in my mind was that their faces were covered with scarves or cloths.



HULTON ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES

The wheelbarrow, which had a gate or hurdle on top of it, was much larger than any I had seen, then or since. On top of the hurdle lay two dark forms. After manoeuvring the barrow so that it stood sideways to the pit, they each took a pitchfork and between them lifted the smaller of the two objects and hurled it into what I was amazed to see was no longer a shallow depression but a deep pit.

It was then I realised that the dark form was the body of a child; its arms and legs flailed about as it was thrown off the barrow. I wanted to run away, but was frozen to the spot. Then they were levering their forks under the second object, which fell to the ground beside the pit, there to be pushed and rolled until lost from sight. This was obviously the body of an adult. I have a hazy recollection of the men standing there looking at me, or so I thought: with their faces swathed in cloths there was no telling where they were looking. Thinking about it since, I realise they were looking into the pit, because I saw them cross themselves in the manner I had seen the vicar do in church.

At this point I must have passed out. When I came to the first thing that registered was the smell of damp earth and decaying leaves, a smell that still sends shivers through me. I scrambled to my feet and ran. I vaguely remember meeting up with my friends, but what happened then I have forgotten, other than the tremendous feeling of relief when I reached home.

That night and for many nights afterwards I couldn't get the scene out of my mind. A murder had been committed, I thought – in fact two murders. I had seen the killers and they had seen me! I wanted to tell my family but I was too afraid – afraid that if I did it would become common knowledge and the killers would 'silence' me. At school the next morning, I was thankful to see that none of the children was missing, but many weeks passed before the dread that someone would pounce on me and kill me faded. I was haunted day and night by the spectre of those faceless killers. My mother knew something was troubling me, but I dared not explain.

After a few months I began to view the event in a different light. Firstly, it hadn't been a shallow depression but a deep – and for all I knew, bottomless – pit. Secondly, it had all taken place in complete silence. Finally, there was the matter of the trees. When I arrived at the site, the trees were as I had always known them – hawthorns, about 12 to 15 feet [3.6-4.6m] tall; and, it being autumn or winter, they were leafless. The trees that stood around the pit in my nightmare were tall, 30 or 40 feet [9-12m] tall, *and were in full leaf*.

Now, a lot older and a little wiser, I believe I experienced a time slip or 'flashback', probably back to the time of the Black Death. Consider the facts: the unceremonious disposal of the bodies; the use of pitchforks to avoid handling them; the covering of faces to avoid the 'miasma'; and making the sign of the cross. Also, the pit was much deeper than it was in my lifetime.

I have never mentioned this episode to anyone, partly I think because I hoped to forget it. When I realised that I would never expel it from my memory, I thought that no one would believe me anyway. But I have decided to put it on record to let people know that these things do happen.

SJK
Warwickshire

Phantom footsteps

In 1992 or thereabouts, I was at my then-girlfriend parents' house in Runcorn in Cheshire on a weekend away from college. Her parents were both around, as were her younger brother and several of his biker friends. One afternoon, someone there (I forget who) announced tentatively that they could hear what sounded like human footsteps walking across the roof of the kitchen extension. Most of us were in the kitchen at the time, and laughingly expressed our scepticism – until we heard it too. Sure enough, it sounded exactly like footsteps, slow and deliberate, the sound apparently moving from one corner of the ceiling to the other. It kept happening as we sat in the kitchen, drinking tea and speculating as to the cause – mice? But there was no loft space above, and in any case the sound was distinctly similar to footsteps, not scurrying or scratching. We of course went into the garden and looked up above the kitchen to make sure that no one was actually standing on the roof playing a practical joke. There wasn't, but the sound of apparent footsteps continued. I couldn't think of a suitable explanation then, and I still can't now.

Matt Kenway
Pocklington, East Yorkshire

FORTEAN TRAVELLER

96. Lomé's Voodoo Market, Togo

TOM COOTE hunts for a bargain at one of the world's strangest markets and finds a love rat hotel manager struggling with a Vodosi's curse...

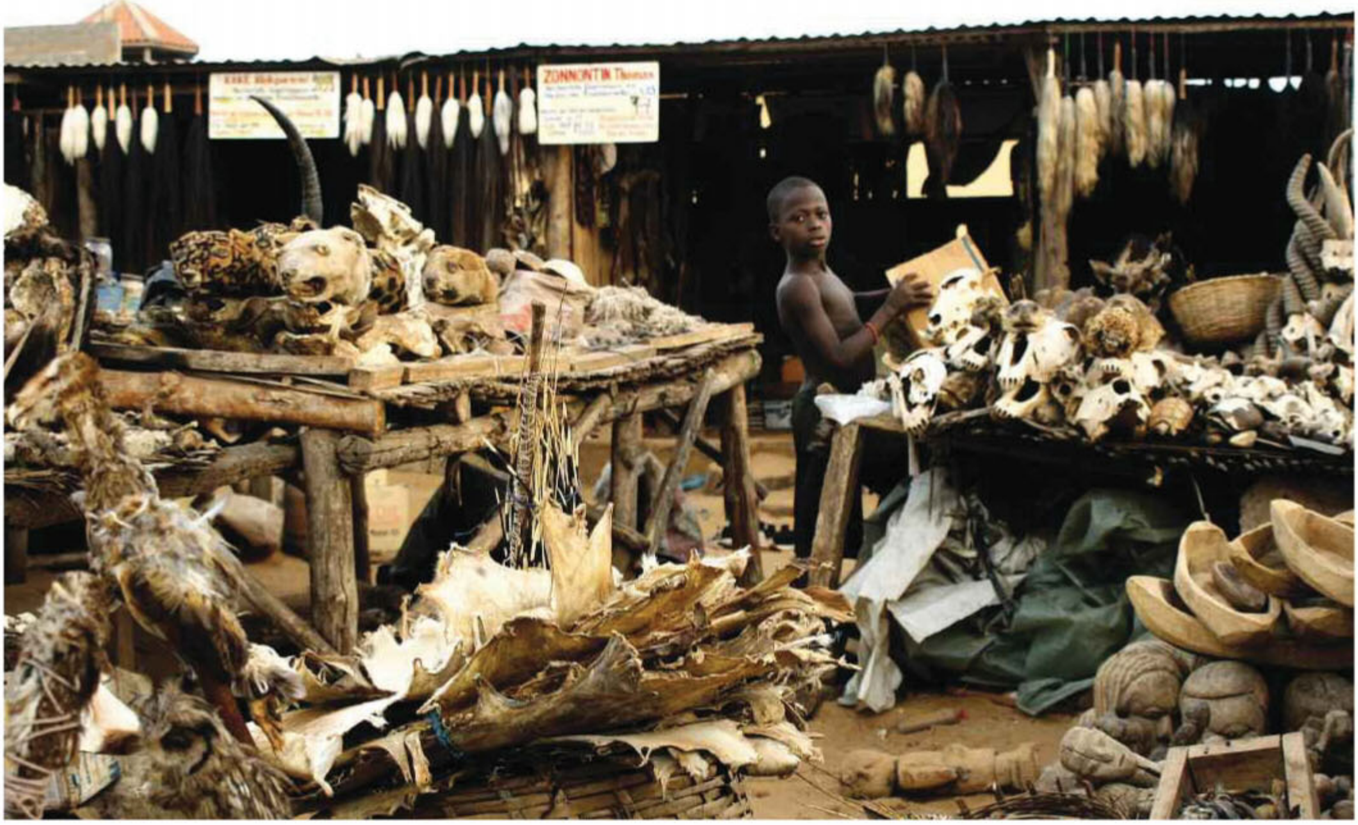
Marco turned up for breakfast in what appeared to be his pyjamas. I couldn't decide whether the large black and white stripes running across his baggy suit made him look more like Andy Pandy or an escaped convict. He was tall, with a flat top haircut and a moustache, spoke good English and seemed friendly. At first he seemed a little reluctant to take a seat at our table in the forecourt of Hotel le Galion but he soon relaxed into a spiel about the pleasures that lay ahead. I found it difficult to believe that he would go to the trouble of escorting us to the voodoo market without expecting some kind of financial reward but there did seem to be a possibility that Dave might hire him as a guide if he were to travel up to the hill forests around Kpalimé.

I was about to more explicitly raise the awkward subject of money, when the hotel's young manager walked up behind Marco and brusquely tapped him on the shoulder before wriggling his finger at him in a 'come over here immediately' sort of way. A few minutes later, Marco returned to our table and told us we should get going. When I asked him what that was all about, he told me that the manager thought that he might be stealing business from him. He asked us to meet him outside.

BELOW AND OPPOSITE: Interesting items for sale at the Fetish Market.

As the Fetish Market was several miles across town, Marco waved down a taxi, and negotiated what was, apparently, a fair price. After a short but hot and bumpy taxi ride across Lomé, Togo's capital city, we pulled up outside the wooden gates to the voodoo market and somewhat reluctantly coughed up the overinflated entrance fee for tourists. I had expected a typically crowded, bustling African marketplace, but it was just a dusty car park with a line of wooden stalls up against the far side. Stacked amongst the lines of what looked to be crudely made tourist trinkets and other assorted junk were shrivelled monkey's heads, animal skins, squashed lizards and tangles of slightly mouldy looking snakes. Some of these magical ingredients would be incorporated by marabouts into malevolent juju rituals while other fetishes would be purchased in the hope of gaining luck, love or money. Many poor West Africans – rather than investing in education, health or housing – would rather spend what little money they have on fetishes that they believe will bring them good luck in exams or fast, easy wealth. If these magically imbued trinkets fail to deliver upon their promises, then it is because they failed to invest enough; if they do get lucky, then this only serves to reinforce superstitious belief, and such illusions of power can quickly become addictive.

It's not only the poor and the powerless that fall under the spell of voodoo and witchcraft: many of West Africa's leaders and wealthy elites are



drenched in the bloody and sacrificial culture of juju-marabou. When a shiny new BMW pulled in through the gates, the stallholders abandoned their grisly collections to us, and rushed over in a rising storm of dust. Apparently they were rich Nigerians who journeyed regularly to the Fetish Market and were known to spend up to $10,000 in a single visit. Such huge amounts of money, being offered for particularly rare or powerful magical ingredients, act as a great temptation to the impoverished: in Liberia and Sierra Leone, bodies have been found, emptied of their organs, and the trend in East Africa for murdering albinos for their hearts and livers has recently spread to Ghana.

A number of influential West African leaders – such as Gnassingbé Eyadéma (Togo), Foday Sankoh (Sierra Leone) and Charles Taylor (Liberia) – appear to have deliberately cultivated a magical mystique in order to inspire both fear and awe. Eyadéma regularly consulted diviners, had a live-in savant, and was widely believed to be able to kill through the use of mystical powers. When he survived a plane crash in 1974, he insisted that he had been saved by the spirit Gu (Ogun), to which he sacrificed all-white animals, while at the same time also claiming to be blessed by the Christian God. Sankoh believed that massive human sacrifices and ritual murders had made him so powerful that no bullet could ever penetrate him. He also claimed to have the power to simply vanish into thin air. Between 1991 and 2002, a powerful mix of juju-marabou and drugs led to around 500,000 Sierra Leoneans being murdered, raped or mutilated. Many of these atrocities were carried out by child soldiers: the rebel leaders would open up scars across the children's faces and heads, before rubbing cocaine directly into their blood stream through the open wounds, and then unleashing the frenzied juveniles upon their 'enemies'. Liberia's Charles Taylor was also notorious for his involvement in human sacrifice and ritual murder: when his rebel army – who wore magical amulets to protect them from bullets – finally took control of the capital, Monrovians were shocked to see these rural invaders ripping out and eating their victims' hearts.

Once the wealthy Nigerians had left, with whatever they had come for, the Vodusi led us into a poorly lit back room and sat us down. They handed each of us a wooden bowl and proceeded to hold up a series of fetishes that they had blessed, giving a brief explanation of each object's special powers, before dropping one of each into our bowls. One of the fetishes was an ugly little figure with a sprouting of dried grass hair, which was supposed to protect your house. Another one was a special necklace made up of 51 herbs – they seemed a bit vague about what it was supposed to do. I really wasn't sure what I was doing in there but it all became clear when they asked us how much we would like to pay for the contents of our bowls. I told them that I wasn't interested, as politely as I could, and handed back the wooden bowl. The 'priest' looked a bit disappointed in me and placed a small pendant in my hand as a 'gift', which he assured me would guarantee good fortune when travelling. He then asked me how much I would like to donate and made a polite suggestion of an appropriate amount that was clearly absurd. I handed the pendant back as well. I didn't need it – the Gods of Travel were already with me. They then asked me to leave the room so that they could talk to Dave in private. A few minutes later, he emerged clutching a small plastic bag containing two small, crudely constructed fetishes. He had somehow managed to bargain them down from 60,000 to 32,000 CFA (about $45). Apparently he had always wanted to own a 'genuine' voodoo fetish.

He believed that no bullet could ever penetrate him

Later in the day, I asked the young manager of Hotel Le Galion why he had spoken to Marco so sternly. He sighed, in a way that seemed to indicate that it was a long and unfortunate story, but nevertheless agreed to sit down with me and tell me all about it. As I suspected, Marco was well known for his attachments to both tourists and prostitutes. He had also been accused of ripping off tourists who had been foolish enough to hand over to him their documents or cash. This wasn't, however, why the young manager had taken such a dislike to him. It was, he claimed, because Marco had tried to have him killed.

At the time of the incident, the manager had been having big problems with his "hot" Togolese wife. While they were living apart, he had become involved with a European girl who was a guest at the hotel. Fearing that he would inevitably be drawn back to his exceptionally beautiful wife, the girl had paid Marco to take a lock of the manager's hair to the Vodusi, who then used it to place a love spell upon him. At this point in the story it all seemed to get a bit muddled. Somewhere along the line, the love spell seemed to have been upgraded to a curse. "It's not that I believe in it," claimed the manager, "but they really do, and he intended to do me harm." For true believers, a curse really can lead to death: when those, conditioned from birth to believe in such phenomena, are told by all around them that they are going to die, then this can result in a self-fulfilling prophecy of anxiety and despair in which the victims just seem to give in to the diseases that are all around them. The manager assured me that he had seen this happen. He was now back with his wife, and happy and healthy, but still seemed disturbed by the malevolence of such magic. "He could have killed me," stated the manager… seeming to surrender his claim to be a disbeliever.

TOM COOTE is the author of *Tearing up the Silk Road* and *Voodoo, Slaves and White Man's Graves*. He has visited over 100 countries, co-founded *Wicked World Magazine* and can be found at www.tomcoote.net.

reader info

how to subscribe

ANNUAL SUB of 12 issues (inc p&p) UK £39.98; EC £47.50; USA $89.99 ($161.98 for 24 issues); Rest of World £55.
Please see house ads in the latest issue for details of special offers.

North America (US & Canada)

Subscribers should contact: IMS. 3330 Pacific Avenue, Suite 404, Virginia Beach, VA 23454, USA. Tel: 888-428 6676. or 800-428 3003; Fax: 757 428 6253; Or order online at www.imsnews.com.

UK, Europe & rest of world

Major credit cards accepted. Cheques or money orders should be in sterling, preferably drawn on a London bank and made payable to Dennis Publishing. Mail to: **Fortean Times** Dovetail Services, 800 Guillat Avenue, Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne, ME9 8GU, UK. NB: This address should be used for orders and subscriptions only.
Telephone payments and queries: 0844 844 0049.
Fax payments and queries: 0844 815 0866.
E-mail payments and queries: ForteanTimes@servicehelpline.co.uk

how to submit

Dennis Publishing reserves all rights to reuse material submitted by *FT* readers and contributors in any medium or format.

Illustrations

Contact the art director by email (etienne@forteantimes.com) before sending samples of work. We cannot guarantee to respond to unsolicited work, though every effort will be made to do so.

Article submissions

Please send all submissions to David Sutton, Editor, Fortean Times, PO BOX 71602, London E17 0QD, UK or email drsuttton@forteantimes.com. As we receive a large volume of submissions, a decision may not be immediate. A contributors' guide is available at www.forteantimes.com.

Letters

Letters of comment or about experiences are welcome. Send to PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK or email sieveking@forteantimes.com. We reserve the right to edit submissions.

Books, periodicals, DVDs and other material for review

Send to: Fortean Times, PO BOX 71602, London E17 0QD, UK.

Caveat

FT aims to present the widest range of interpretations to stimulate discussion and welcomes helpful criticism. The opinions of contributors are not necessarily those of the editors. *FT* can take no responsibility for submissions, but will take all reasonable care of material in its possession. Requests for return of material should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope or an International Reply Coupon.

We occasionally use material that has been placed in the public domain. It is not always possible to identify the copyright holder. If you claim credit for something we've published, we'll be pleased to make acknowledgement.

- -

Clippers wanted!

Regular clipsters have provided the lifeblood of *Fortean Times* since it began in 1973. One of the delights for the editors is receiving packets of clips from Borneo or Brazil, Saudi Arabia or Siberia. We invite you to join in the fun and send in anything weird, from trade journals, local newspapers, extracts from obscure tomes, or library newspaper archives.

To minimise the time spent on preparing clippings for a Fort Sort, we ask that you cut them out and not fold them too small. Mark each clip (on the front, where possible) with the source, date and your name, so that we can credit you in the listing (right) when we use the material. For UK local and overseas clips, please give the town of publication. For foreign language clips, we appreciate brief translations. To avoid confusion over day and month, please write the date in this form: 1 OCT 2014. If you send photocopies, copy on one side of the paper only.

Mail to: Fortean Times, PO Box 2409, London NW5 4NP, UK
E-mail: sieveking@forteantimes.com
or post on the FT website at www.forteantimes.co.uk, where there is a contributor's guide.

Why Fortean?

Fortean Times is a monthly magazine of news, reviews and research on strange phenomena and experiences, curiosities, prodigies and portents. It was founded by Bob Rickard in 1973 to continue the work of Charles Fort (1874–1932).

Born of Dutch stock in Albany, New York, Fort spent many years researching scientific literature in the New York Public Library and the British Museum Library. He marshalled his evidence and set forth his philosophy in *The Book of the Damned* (1919), *New Lands* (1923), *Lo!* (1931), and *Wild Talents* (1932).

He was sceptical of scientific explanations, observing how scientists argued according to their own beliefs rather than the rules of evidence and that inconvenient data were ignored, suppressed, discredited or explained away. He criticised modern science for its reductionism, its attempts to define, divide and separate. Fort's dictum "One measures a circle beginning anywhere" expresses instead his philosophy of Continuity in which everything is in an intermediate and transient state between extremes.

He had ideas of the Universe-as-organism and the transient nature of all apparent phenomena, coined the term 'teleportation', and was perhaps the first to speculate that mysterious lights seen in the sky might be craft from outer space. However, he cut at the very roots of credulity: "I conceive of nothing, in religion, science or philosophy, that is more than the proper thing to wear, for a while."

Fort was by no means the first person to collect anomalies and oddities – such collections have abounded from Greece to China since ancient times. **Fortean Times** keeps alive this ancient task of dispassionate weird-watching, exploring the wild frontiers between the known and the unknown.

From the viewpoint of mainstream science, its function is elegantly stated in a line from Enid Welsford's book on the mediæval fool: "The Fool does not lead a revolt against the Law; he lures us into a region of the spirit where... the writ does not run."

Besides being a journal of record, **FT** is also a forum for the discussion of observations and ideas, however absurd or unpopular, and maintains a position of benevolent scepticism towards both the orthodox and unorthodox. **FT** toes no party line.

Special Correspondents

AUSTRALIA Graham Cordon (SA), Tony Healy (ACT), John Palazzi (NSW), Len Watson (Qld). **CANADA** Brian Chapman (BC), Graham Conway (BC), **CYBERSPACE** Richard Alexander, John F Callahan, Hugh Henry, Steve Scanlon. **ENGLAND** Gail-Nina Anderson, Louise Bath, James Beckett, Claire Blamey, Peter Christie, Mat Coward, Kate Eccles, Paul Farthing, George Featherston, Paul Gallagher, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Anne Hardwick, Richard Lowke, Alexis Lykiard, Diana Lyons, Dave Malin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Tom Ruffles, Meryl Santis, Paul Screeton, Gary Stocker, Roman Suchyj, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Nick Warren, Owen Whiteoak, Bobby Zodiac. **FRANCE** Michel Meurger. **GERMANY** Ulrich Magin. **HOLLAND** Robin Pascoe. **IRELAND** Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Andrew Munro. **ISRAEL** Zvi Ron. **NEW ZEALAND** Peter Hassall. **ROMANIA** Iosif Boczor. **SCOTLAND** Roger Musson. **SWEDEN** Sven Rosén. **THAILAND** Chris Williams. **USA** Loren Coleman (ME), Jim Conlan (CT), Myron Hoyt (ME), Greg May (FL), Dolores Phelps (TX), Jim Riecken (NY), Joseph Trainor (MA), Jeffrey Vallance (CA), Gary Yates (UT). **WALES** Janet & Colin Bord.

Fort Sorters (who classify clippings placed in the Archives for Fortean Research)

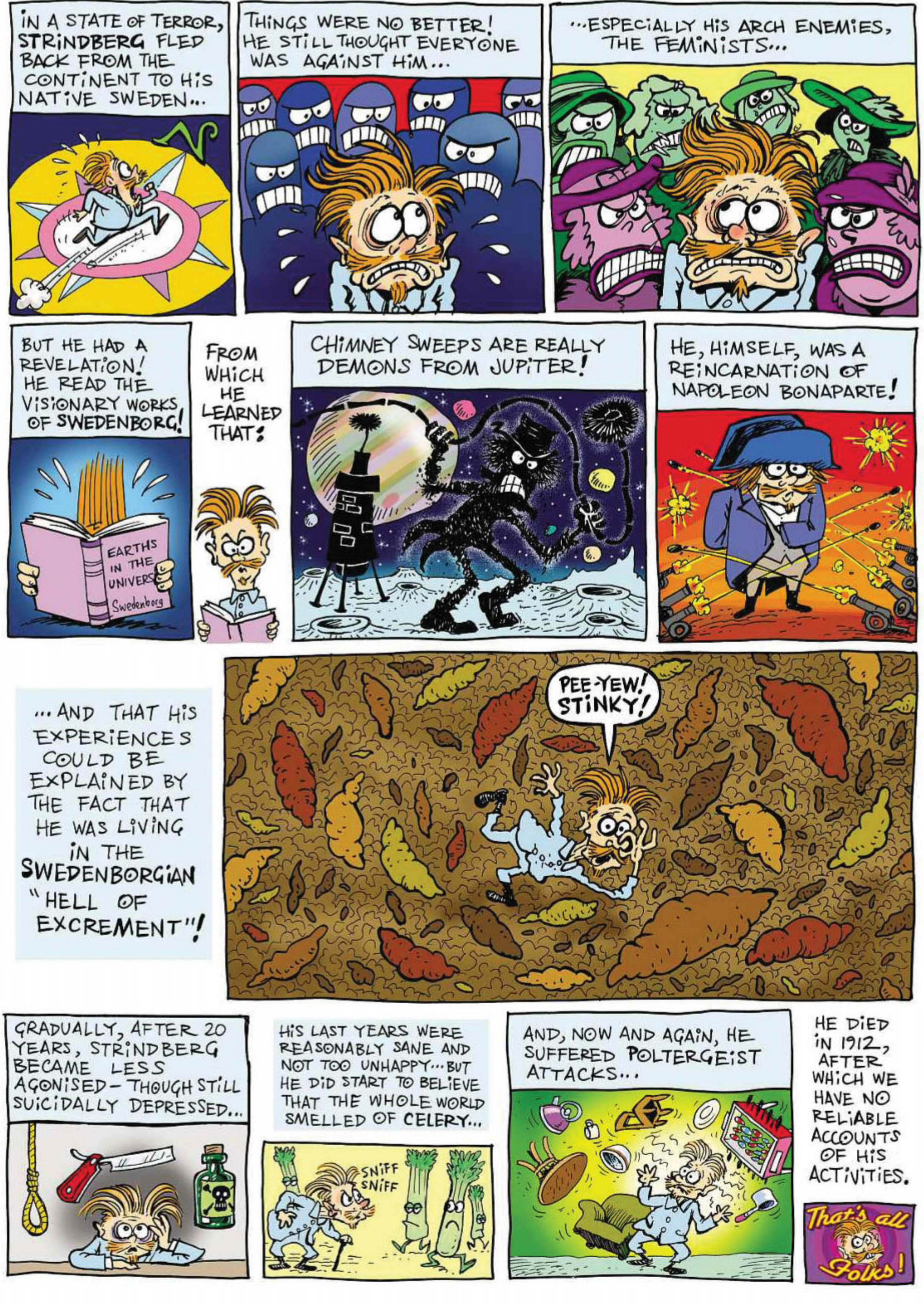
Phil Baker, Rachel Carthy, Mark Pilkington, Bob Rickard, Paul Sieveking, Ian Simmons.

Clipping Credits for FT319

Richard Alexander, Gerard Apps, David V Barrett, Louise Bath, James Beckett, Cecilia Boggis, Joy Choppen, Peter Christie, Andy Conlon, Pat Corcoran, Brian Duffy, Kate Eccles, John H Evans, Paul Farthing, Eric Fitch, Alan Gardiner, Keith George, Richard George, Hugh Henry, Nigel Herwin, Colin Ings, Ernest Jackson, Paul Jackson, Rosalind Johnson, Richard Lowke, Dave Malin, Bert & Betty Gray-Malkin, Nick Maloret, Valerie Martin, Tom Mason, Greg May, Steve Moore, Andy Munro, John Palazzi, Jim Price, Barry Purcell, Tom Ruffles, Meryl Santis, Tony Smith, Gary Stocker, Paul Street, Frank Thomas, Paul Thomas, Joe Trainor, Dave Trevor, Carole Tyrrell, Nicholas Warren, Len Watson, Owen Whiteoak, Paul Whyte, Janet Wilson, Peter Robert Wilson, Bobby Zodiac.

PHENOMENOMIX

STRINDBERG 3 HUNT EMERSON & KEVIN JACKSON


IN A STATE OF TERROR, STRINDBERG FLED BACK FROM THE CONTINENT TO HIS NATIVE SWEDEN...
THINGS WERE NO BETTER! HE STILL THOUGHT EVERYONE WAS AGAINST HIM...
...ESPECIALLY HIS ARCH ENEMIES, THE FEMINISTS...
BUT HE HAD A REVELATION! HE READ THE VISIONARY WORKS OF SWEDENBORG!
EARTHS IN THE UNIVERS
Swedenborg
FROM WHICH HE LEARNED THAT:
CHIMNEY SWEEPS ARE REALLY DEMONS FROM JUPITER!
HE, HIMSELF, WAS A REINCARNATION OF NAPOLEON BONAPARTE!
... AND THAT HIS EXPERIENCES COULD BE EXPLAINED BY THE FACT THAT HE WAS LIVING IN THE SWEDENBORGIAN "HELL OF EXCREMENT"!
PEE-YEW! STINKY!
GRADUALLY, AFTER 20 YEARS, STRINDBERG BECAME LESS AGONISED – THOUGH STILL SUICIDALLY DEPRESSED...
HIS LAST YEARS WERE REASONABLY SANE AND NOT TOO UNHAPPY... BUT HE DID START TO BELIEVE THAT THE WHOLE WORLD SMELLED OF CELERY...
SNIFF SNIFF
AND, NOW AND AGAIN, HE SUFFERED POLTERGEIST ATTACKS...
HE DIED IN 1912, AFTER WHICH WE HAVE NO RELIABLE ACCOUNTS OF HIS ACTIVITIES.
That's all Folks!

COMING NEXT MONTH

FOUR COLOUR FEAR

THE HORROR COMICS PANIC AND THE ART OF DISTRACTION

TERROR AND WONDER

TWO AND HALF CENTURIES OF THE GOTHIC IMAGINATION

+

THE SHADOW PEOPLE, ANNE RICE INTERVIEW, LUCIFER IN LINCOLN AND MUCH MORE...

FORTEAN TIMES 320

ON SALE 16 OCT 2014

STRANGE DEATHS

UNUSUAL WAYS OF SHUFFLING OFF THIS MORTAL COIL

Giant anteaters in northern Brazil have killed two hunters in separate incidents. “Both were farmers, were hunting and were attacked by wounded or cornered animals,” wrote Vidal Haddad of the Botucatu School of Medicine at São Paulo State University in the journal *Wilderness and Environmental Medicine*, which went online in July. In one case, a 47-year-old man was hunting with his two sons and his dogs on 1 August 2012 when they came upon a giant anteater, which the hunter approached with knife drawn. The anteater stood on its hind legs and grabbed him with its forelimbs, causing deep puncture wounds in his thighs and upper arms; he bled to death at the scene. The other case involved a 75-year-old man who died in 2010 when an anteater used its long front claws – which typically help it dig into anthills – to puncture his femoral arteries, located in the groin and thigh.

The giant anteater (*Myrmecophaga tridactyla*) is closely related to the sloth. Some 5,000 exist in the wild and can be found in parts of Central and South America. Their numbers have declined about 30 per cent in the past decade due to habitat loss, roadkills, hunting, wildfires and burning of sugar cane plantations. They range in length from 4ft to 7ft (1.2-2m), and may weigh as much as 100lb (45kg). They eat mainly ants and termites, but they also enjoy citrus and avocados. *[AFP] 26 July 2014.*

For the second time this year, someone in the Tampa Bay area has mistaken a body for a mannequin and thrown it in a dumpster. It happened in St Petersburg, Florida, in April when a security guard trashed the body of an elderly woman who had jumped to her death from her 16th-floor balcony [FT316:80]. And it happened in Spring Hill on 17 July when two workers – Israel Lopez and Adam Hines – hired to clean out a house, believed the body of a man who hanged himself in the garage was a mannequin used for “a distasteful Halloween-like hoax” by the former tenants. The house was in disarray; there were a lot of dead rats and the men believed that was the source of a foul smell. The men cut the body down, placed it in a pickup along with other refuse, and hauled everything to the West Hernando garbage transfer station, where county workers became suspicious and called the police. The dead man was identified as Jeremy Allen Witfoth, 33. He had apparently committed suicide several weeks earlier and his body was in a “state of decomposition similar to mummification.” *tampabay.com/news, 20 July; Irish Independent, 22 July 2014.*

On the morning of 25 June, in a noodle shop in Suizhou, Hubei province, China, Bo Tuan, 29, asked Yul Liao, 48, if he would share his bowl of noodles with him. After Yul refused, the two began arguing. Bo then produced a knife and slashed Yul’s throat with it before opening Yul’s chest and removing his heart. He then walked aimlessly round the dead body with Yul’s heart in his hand and bit into it several times. An eyewitness said: “He sliced him open like he was a bag of rice, and pulled his heart out in front of us all. I swear it was still beating.” Bo surrendered to police without incident when they finally arrived 40 minutes later. *D.Mirror, 28 June; [UPI] Guardian Liberty Voice, 30 June 2014.*

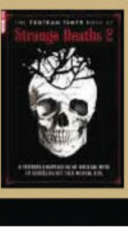
Local people in the village of Lixnaw, County Kerry, are seeking the demolition of a cottage they believe to be cursed. At least five tragic deaths are associated with the property. Lixnaw’s parish priest said locals believe there is a *máchail* (defect or harm) or *mí-ádh* (bad luck) associated with the council-owned cottage on the edge of Ballynageragh bog. Five of its residents have been the victims of tragic, accidental or violent deaths. On 27 November 2013, Susan Dunne (62) was murdered there by her autistic son, Patrick (20). Locals also say a man who lived in the cottage was stabbed in Wales, another resident died in a road accident, and in the past 20 years there have been three further deaths at the cottage, all involving different families. The council has confirmed that they are considering demolishing the cottage. *irishcentral.com/news, 18 July 2014.*

Sheena Kavanagh, 53, a care home chef from Hilderstone, Staffordshire, died after she was licked by one of her dogs. She developed a rare septic infection after the dog’s saliva entered her bloodstream from a tiny cut on her hand. Because her spleen had been removed in 1988, she lacked protection against bacterial infection and fell ill, even though she routinely took penicillin twice a day. She was taken to Stafford Hospital on 24 April and died the following night. “*Capnocytophaga canimorsus*, an organism present in dog saliva, normally doesn’t cause damage,” said pathologist Dr Hiam Ali. “But in people without a spleen it can cause death due to septic shock – but it is extremely rare.” Her daughter Melissa Bromfield, 27, said: “It was a shock as she had been around dogs all her life. She had two Yorkshire terriers, a long-haired Jack Russell and six horses. She loved all animals.” *Sunday Telegraph, 3 July; D.Mail, 4 Aug 2014.*

Jennifer Meaker, 66, died after leaving her contraceptive coil in for 29 years, as she was too scared of hospitals to have it removed. She had the device fitted in 1985 and died from a perforated uterus after a fall at her home in Bideford, Devon, last February. *D.Telegraph, Sun, 24 July 2014.*

Andrew Tomlinson, 44, of Westcliff, Essex, died in June after burning his buttocks in the bath. His burns turned septic in hospital and he died days later. He had endured increasingly hot soaks in a bid to ease chronic back pain. *Sun, 25 June*

THE FORTEAN TIMES BOOK OF STRANGE DEATHS VOL 2
ON SALE NOW FROM
W H SMITH AND AMAZON.CO.UK
TO ORDER DIRECT CALL 0844 844 0053



The PRANA Talisman

ADVERTISEMENT

How does **PRANA** work? The way traditional magic has always worked!...

With very little time and effort, the Prana Talisman can provide its owner with the inner power to achieve any positive goals that they wish, however ambitious! Centuries of wisdom, knowledge and practice have percolated down from the scholars and mystics of the ancient world, and now their legacy can be revealed and offered to you, in the form of the Prana.

Here is the most important aspect; the Prana will remain nothing more than an interesting metal pendant displaying some curious and mysterious-looking symbols before it is first activated, or consecrated. However, once properly and personally consecrated, it will be transformed into a real and powerful talisman dedicated to helping you to achieve the success you desire. Just as with a brand a new car, which would first need fueling and then purposefully driving in the right direction before it could actually deliver anyone to their destination, the Prana disc will need charging with both your own positive mental energy as well as the earth's natural forces, and then focusing on your personal goals before it can succeed in achieving them. Consecrating your Prana takes only a few, but priceless minutes. Anything can be achieved with enough self belief and determination, providing it is humanly possible. Prana is the truly magic catalyst that will assist you in achieving your most ambitious goals and desires. Once your Prana has been effectively consecrated, or 'tuned', in just the way a TV antenna collects and converts invisible signals and then broadcasts them as a clear picture, it will collect and magnify all the available natural, positive forces along with your own psychic energies, and then channel them straight towards your personal goals.

The PRANA Talisman
Turn your Dreams into Reality
PRANA

. . I think that Prana talisman is working as I have been creating and drawing nonstop and with new confidence. . .
unbelievable. . .
Ms DN, London

Hey… I just wanted to let you know that the talisman is amazing! Thank you! Since I had it, work has been coming in, I feel great and everything seems to be getting better!
Ms NJ, Leicester

For further information visit-

www.PranaTalisman.com

You will feel physically and mentally stronger and energised. Confidence will brim within you and you will feel a potent force rise inside, discovering new personal powers and becoming sharp and decisive. You will intuitively recognise opportunities as they appear when previously they went-by undetected; you will feel 'lucky'!

Instead of stuff just happening around you, you will be able to make things happen!

Each PRANA talisman comes with its own 12 page booklet of easy instuctions and is supplied in a purple satin pouch.

www.PranaTalisman.com

The deluxe crystalised PRANA
The original PRANA
PRANA
The PRANA Talisman
Turn your Dreams into Reality
with the Power of Magic and your Mind
Quick & Easy Instructions for Using your Prana

The PRANA Talisman

Turn your Dreams into Reality
with the Power of Magic & your Mind

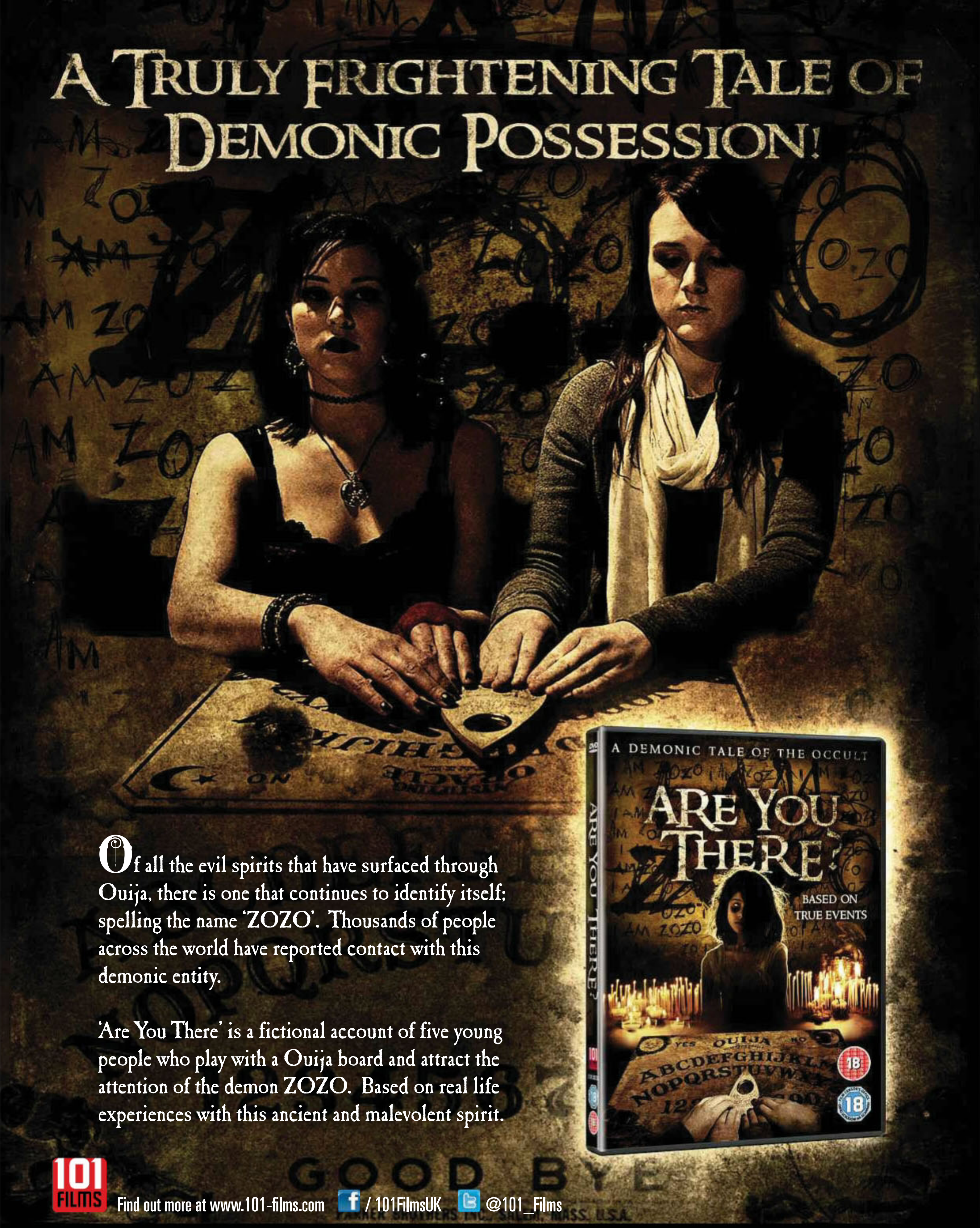
PRANA is a real and very powerful, authentic magical talisman of ancient origin, to help you achieve all your goals.

Supplied in its own individual pouch & complete with a simple 12 page booklet of instructions and background information.

PRANA Original - £9.99 each
PRANA Deluxe Crystalised Edition - £14.99 each
(Shipping per order: £2.50 UK Mainland; £3.50 Europe; £5.00 R.O.W.) For full details and secure online ordering visit our website.

www.PranaTalisman.com

PRANA - the Talisman of the Elements, the Breath of Life and the Four Archangels.


A TRULY FRIGHTENING TALE OF DEMONIC POSSESSION!
A DEMONIC TALE OF THE OCCULT
ARE YOU THERE?
BASED ON TRUE EVENTS
ARE YOU THERE?
18
GOOD BYE

Of all the evil spirits that have surfaced through Ouija, there is one that continues to identify itself; spelling the name 'ZOZO'. Thousands of people across the world have reported contact with this demonic entity.

'Are You There' is a fictional account of five young people who play with a Ouija board and attract the attention of the demon ZOZO. Based on real life experiences with this ancient and malevolent spirit.

101 FILMS Find out more at www.101-films.com / 101FilmsUK @101_Films

Out Now on DVD

Available at hmv